

# WRITING THE STALIN ERA

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Sheila Fitzpatrick and  
Soviet Historiography



Edited by Golfo Alexopoulos,  
Julie Hessler, and Kiril Tomoff



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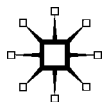
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SOVIET HISTORIOGRAPHY

*Edited by*  
*Golfo Alexopoulos, Julie Hessler,*  
*and Kiril Tomoff*

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First published in 2011 by

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175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN: 978-0-230-10930-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Writing the Stalin era : Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet historiography /  
edited by Golfo Alexopoulos, Kiril Tomoff, and Julie Hessler.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-230-10549-2 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-230-10549-1 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-230-10930-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Fitzpatrick, Sheila. 2. Fitzpatrick, Sheila—Influence.

3. Sovietologists—United States—Biography. 4. Historians—United  
States—Biography. 5. Soviet Union—Historiography. 6. Soviet  
Union—History—1925–1953—Historiography. 7. Stalin, Joseph,  
1879–1953. 8. Soviet Union—History. 9. Soviet Union—Social  
conditions. I. Alexopoulos, Golfo. II. Tomoff, Kiril. III. Hessler, Julie, 1966–  
IV. Fitzpatrick, Sheila.

DK38.7.F58W75 2010

947.084'2072—dc22

2010019027

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: January 2011

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America.

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## PREFACE

The present volume is dedicated to Sheila Fitzpatrick, Bernadotte E. Schmitt Distinguished Service Professor of History at the University of Chicago. Fitzpatrick's numerous studies of the first three decades of Soviet history have fundamentally shaped the way that historians understand the Soviet Union today. This volume approaches her career from three angles: the nature and evolution of her interpretation of Soviet history; the impact of her scholarship on a large contingent of students; and the interaction of personality and experiences in Fitzpatrick's career.

The first two chapters comprise interpretive essays on Fitzpatrick's scholarship. That she has been a singularly influential historian of the Lenin and Stalin periods of Soviet history is noncontroversial, but as might be expected in the case of such a prolific and versatile scholar, her work lends itself to multiple interpretations. The two essays included here offer distinct views of Fitzpatrick's intellectual trajectory, the first emphasizing consistency and the second, variety; the first emphasizing her creative engagement with the larger historical profession and the second, her working through of questions that she had basically generated on her own. It may be germane to note that the essays were written by scholars who enjoyed very different relationships with Fitzpatrick, the one by a contemporary and colleague and the other by a former student.

Many of the essays in chapters 3 through 11, as well as Ronald Grigor Suny's interpretive essay, came out of the Sheila Fitzpatrick Festschrift Conference, which took place on the first two days of the Melbourne Conferences on Soviet and Australian History and Culture, held at University of Melbourne during July 4–8, 2006. The conference brought together most of Sheila Fitzpatrick's former doctoral students, though, as luck would have it, two of the three organizers (now editors) were unable to attend the conference on account of the birth of a child. Participants were asked to prepare papers loosely related to one of Fitzpatrick's major areas of research: politics and culture, the state and social groups, and Soviet identities. These themes can still be discerned in the revised papers collected in this volume, while a further theme, also strongly inflected by Fitzpatrick's scholarship, has emerged as well: several contributors have framed their chapters around sources relating to the interaction between the ordinary citizen and Soviet power.

The final panel in Melbourne was a roundtable on the question, "Is there a Fitzpatrick school of Soviet history?" To our surprise, roundtable



participants largely agreed on their answer, to wit a soft yes, more sociological and methodological than interpretive, based on her students' shared commitment to archival sources and sense of *esprit de corps*. This volume may allow readers to identify other areas of commonality between Sheila and her students, though admittedly we have stacked the deck by asking for essays related to Fitzpatrick's own research interests. Contributors have themselves commented, with varying degrees of explicitness, on the relationship between their scholarship and hers. Some have moved in a more policy-oriented direction than Fitzpatrick herself, or focused on different periods (prerevolutionary, post-1953, the two World Wars), but the questions that she asks—in her scholarship and in person, in her penetrating critiques of written work—have exerted a formative influence on all the authors. Many of us still have the urge to send her the manuscripts of any significant writings. By showcasing the scholarship of Fitzpatrick's students, and particularly of the huge cohort, now 27 and counting, of historians who have completed their doctorates under her supervision at University of Chicago since 1990, these chapters underscore the tremendous role of advising and encouraging young scholars in Fitzpatrick's life's work.

Chapter 12 shifts the lens from Fitzpatrick's contributions to Soviet history to her character and career. With the aim of introducing a personal dimension to the volume, we asked Sheila Fitzpatrick's friends and colleagues from various periods of her life to contribute a reminiscence about the Sheila they knew. Our model was the genre of reminiscences by contemporaries that one frequently encounters in Russian literary, cultural, and scientific life. Sheila's unusual family background as the daughter of a famous (perhaps notorious) leftist intellectual and activist; her journey from Australia to England to the United States, with long sojourns in Russia, Germany, France, and again Australia; and her experience as a woman who was critical of the Soviet Union but not hostile to it in a field dominated by strongly anti-Soviet men, have no doubt contributed to the "detached engagement" that Ron Suny describes as a unique characteristic of her work. They also make for some good stories. Our intention in this section is not hagiographical, but rather biographical and psychological, as the "contemporaries" offer many insights into how Fitzpatrick reacted to her personal, geographical, and professional milieus.

Preparing this volume has been a labor of love. As a scholar, a mentor, and a friend, Sheila Fitzpatrick has been a significant person in our lives and, indeed, in the lives of all the contributors. We hope that the volume will stimulate readers to think about this important historian in a new light, as well as to engage with recent research by some of her former students. Above all, we hope that Sheila herself finds it a fitting tribute to her remarkable scholarly career.

GOLFO ALEXOPOULOS  
JULIE HESSLER  
KIRIL TOMOFF

CHAPTER 1

WRITING RUSSIA: THE WORK OF  
SHEILA FITZPATRICK

*Ronald Grigor Suny*

Historians, unlike some postmodern anthropologists, usually efface their own personality when writing their work. The political views of a person are seen as an encumbrance, a limit on objectivity and neutrality. Ideally, the true historian ought to be like a filter through which the archival effluvia seeps with the minimum of subjective clogging. Most practicing historians know, of course, that selectivity, interpretation, emphasis, and even artistry make complete objectivity impossible, even as the best of them work as artisans careful about not allowing their personal and political bias to overwhelm the evidence. Historians cannot stand outside history, free from time and place. Someone had to educate the educator. Therefore, evaluating the contributions of a major historian such as Sheila Fitzpatrick, where she came from, what influences shaped her, and how she chose to deal with her own past should not be seen as merely a superfluous addendum to her intellectual biography but a window through which the products of her creative efforts can be understood.

Sheila Fitzpatrick was born in Melbourne, Australia, on June 4, 1941, the daughter of Brian Fitzpatrick and Dorothy Mary Davies. She grew up and was educated in that Southern Hemisphere city; graduated from its premier university, where she first became interested in Russian history; and then took her rich life experience in an extraordinary family into her work and the wider world. The unique amalgam of three English-speaking countries, three university systems, and three distinct, though not unrelated, professional cultures has given her work a special quality, which I would call “detached engagement.” By that I mean that throughout her writing Sheila has maintained, in so far as they are possible to achieve, the highest scholarly standards of objectivity, neutrality, and faithfulness to the sources (archival if at all available), and careful, thoughtful reconstruction of a complex and elusive past. At the same time, she is deeply engaged in the central questions affecting Soviet history, fearlessly treading on the toes of sacrosanct orthodoxies, forcing reluctant readers to rethink what they thought they knew,

resisting easy categorization into this group or that (she does not want to be “ascribed”), and undermining the facile generalizations and essentialist understandings of Soviet history in general, and Stalinism in particular, that have marred Western scholarship on the USSR.

She is, without doubt, her father’s daughter, and yet her work exists in an acute tension with the thrust of much of his writing and activity. Brian Fitzpatrick was a very public intellectual, a renegade journalist and, later, a historian, at the edge of respectable academia. Neither a Marxist nor a Communist, he seems to have been a dedicated anti-anti-Communist. His biographer, Don Watson, writes: “Fitzpatrick did not see Russia as the socialist fatherland but for many years he saw it as an experiment worth supporting and he was convinced that it saved Western democracy in World War II. In many ways he was a ‘fellow traveller.’”<sup>1</sup> A gregarious man, fond of pubs and the people in them, seeking there a special fellowship and community, Brian Fitzpatrick was a democrat, a civil libertarian, a socialist, and a radical nationalist, never a Leninist. He suffered, however, according to Watson, from a “Soviet blind spot” and was willing to “turn a blind eye to Stalinism’s totalitarian abuses of all the ideals he professed.”<sup>2</sup> His daughter “asked him early on (though without getting a serious answer) why we didn’t move to Russia, if, as he seemed to think, things were better there.”<sup>3</sup> As a historian, he was convinced of the fundamental importance of economic factors in historical explanation (more Charles Beard than Karl Marx) and to the end of his life “continued to believe in both the concept and the existence of ‘class,’” even berating C. Wright Mills once for rejecting the term in favor of ‘power elite.’<sup>4</sup> Above all, he was highly suspicious of all authority. In her account of her father, Sheila Fitzpatrick quotes appreciatively his core belief expressed at the height of the cold war in 1953: “First, power corrupts men wielding it, whether Communists or Catholics, Marxists or Mennonites. And secondly, all governments are bad, and some worse.”<sup>5</sup>

What a home that must have been to have grown up in! Certainly engagement comes out of it and given all the heat and controversy, perhaps also the imperative to cultivate detachment as well. Growing up in a leftist family in anti-Communist cold war Australia—at a time when any sympathy displayed toward the Soviet project, combined with criticism of one’s own country, placed one outside the comfort zone of acceptable views—may have stimulated a life-long search in Sheila Fitzpatrick to try to get the Soviet story right, to see it in all its varied hues, and to shrug off the accusations of partisanship that would likely follow anyone working toward that noble aim.

She graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1961 and went on to St. Antony’s College, Oxford, where she earned her D.Phil. in 1969, working with Max Hayward, known in the Soviet Union as the “not unknown Max Hayward.”<sup>6</sup> After her thesis was examined by Leonard Shapiro, she met and befriended E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, thus coming to know the broad and contentious pleiade of British academic experts on the USSR. She first went to the Soviet Union to do her dissertation research in 1966, “having just acquired a husband (who was studying in Tokyo),” spent some eighteen

months there, and grew close to Igor Aleksandrovich Sats, a member of the *Novyi mir* editorial board in its liberal period under Aleksandr Tvardovskii, but much earlier Anatolii Lunacharskii's literary secretary (and brother-in-law).<sup>7</sup> She regarded him as an important influence and even "a lately acquired parent."<sup>8</sup> After completing her research, Sheila Fitzpatrick went on to teach at Melbourne, Birmingham, St. John's University in New York, Columbia University, the University of Texas at Austin (I don't want this to sound like she can't hold a job!), and from 1990 at the University of Chicago, where we were colleagues for eleven years.

Sheila Fitzpatrick is currently the Bernadotte E. Schmitt Distinguished Service Professor in Modern Russian History at the University of Chicago; her honors are many. In recognition of her body of work, she was awarded the Mellon Distinguished Achievement Award, which could be equated with a Nobel Prize in History. She is the author of seven books to date and the editor or coeditor of another seven, in addition to eighty articles as an author. Today it is simply impossible for anyone seriously interested in Soviet history not to know and not to have read Sheila's work, and our understanding of Stalinism in particular would be deeply impoverished without her contributions. Sheila was a pioneer in moving the profession from its earlier concentration in imperial Russian history into the current renaissance of Soviet history. For a time, she was the only younger historian doing serious research into postrevolutionary Russia, alongside a handful of older men, some of them quite cranky and possessive about their hold on the field. Her sheer productivity made her the leader in the study of the darkest period of Soviet history, and she has even taught many of us Russian! Before Sheila mentioned them, how many of us had ever heard of *rydvizhentsy* (proletarian promotees) or *obshchestvennitsy* (activist wives)?

In this synthetic overview of her work, I would like to suggest what I take to be Fitzpatrick's Soviet story, how she explains why Russia and its revolution turned out as it did, and what the causes and the consequences of the Bolshevik project were.

Sheila's writings began in the New Economic Policy (NEP) period with swings back into the revolution and civil war but generally progressing forward into the 1930s, World War II, and most recently the postwar and even post-Stalin and post-Soviet periods. At the same time, her methods and thematic interests have gradually moved from institutional and political history, questions of culture and power, through social history, even at times an apolitical social history, into explorations of social identities, everyday life, returning often to various cultural themes. Culture was present from the beginning, in her study of Lunacharskii, and over the years she has explored culture in a variety of modes: the cultural policy of the regime in the 1920s and 1930s (what she referred to as the "soft line"); the transformation of popular and social culture in the revolutionary years of the First Five Year Plan and after; the high culture of people such as Dmitrii Shostakovich; and aspects of cultural practices and discourses that led her into looking at representations and emotions.

In her first published article, a review of Soviet literature on Lunacharskii, the softest of Bolsheviks, Fitzpatrick asks, why Lunacharskii now? Why in the 1960s was there a revival of interest in this second-rank (not second-rate) Bolshevik? "Like so many of his contemporaries," she writes, "Lunacharsky has acquired a symbolic importance: he stands for a relatively permissive policy towards art and literature, and as a mediator between the party and the intelligentsia."<sup>9</sup> She looks at Ehrenburg and Chukovskii as memoirists who, through "a very sophisticated process of selection," construct a useful Lunacharskii who becomes in their view a liberal responsible for the party's soft, neutral line on the arts. This was the Lunacharskii that certain intellectuals of the 1960s needed to support their claim for an art with integrity and room for diversity, if not deviance, within the larger context of a Marxist-Leninist regime. She applauds instead Lunacharskii himself, who in his *Silueti*, autobiographical portraits of Old Bolsheviks, does what a good historian should do—"demythologize, and...reoccupy the old historical ground between rumour and party history."<sup>10</sup>

In the debates over the October Revolution that divided Western historians in the 1960s and 1970s, first political historians, such as Alexander Rabinowitch, and later a generation of young social historians challenged the idea of the Bolshevik victory as the work of a cynical group of political manipulators who successfully and behind the backs of the working class carried out a coup d'état. The new historiography showed that the Bolsheviks had broad support among workers and, even more importantly, soldiers, and that the Petrograd Soviet held sway over the popular forces that determined much of the course of the revolution in the late summer and fall of 1917. The actual events of October were more a coup de grace than a coup d'état in that real power had already passed to the Soviet once it had secured control of the Petrograd garrison through September and into October "in effect disarming the Provisional Government without a shot."<sup>11</sup> In the actual fighting in the October Revolution, from 24 to 26 October, 1917, less than fifteen people were killed. In her own reading of the October Revolution, Fitzpatrick recognizes the overwhelming support that the Bolsheviks had among key constituencies in the city; however, she speaks of a coup d'état. She argues that Lenin was determined to set up a one-party government no matter what the Soviet or some of his closest comrades desired. Although he was ultimately forced to compromise and admit a small number of Left Socialist Revolutionaries into a coalition government, Lenin's own intentions, she contends, played the key role in the eventual creation of a one-party state. She shares Engels's warning that "a socialist party taking power prematurely might find itself isolated and forced into repressive dictatorship," a risk that "the Bolshevik leaders, and Lenin in particular, were willing to take."<sup>12</sup>

The requirement to hold power in a largely peasant country in which their support from workers grew fragile presented the Bolsheviks with a dilemma—the need to gain and hold popular support while at the same time relying on repression to stay in power. Revolutionary violence, then, and terror were built into this revolution. Fitzpatrick, like Robert C. Tucker,

Moshe Lewin, and Stephen F. Cohen, sees the civil war experience as far more formative in the Bolshevik style of rule than the long history of pre-revolutionary social democracy. Actual social experience must supplement ideology; the attitudes and habits of Bolsheviks must be factored in. Soviet authoritarianism stems, first, from the irreducible fact that "a minority dictatorship was almost bound to be authoritarian, and those who served as its executants were extremely likely to develop the habits of bossing and bullying that Lenin often criticized in the years after 1917."<sup>13</sup> Second, the followers of the Bolsheviks—the bulk of Russia's soldiers, sailors, and workers—were less concerned with the niceties of lawful rule than Old Bolshevik intellectuals and were more willing to use force to crush opposition. Civil war certainly shaped what Bolshevism was becoming, but it also must be noted that Lenin and the Bolsheviks welcomed civil war. Their seizure of power in October, followed by the forceful dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, threw down the gauntlet to the liberals and moderate socialists and "gave the new regime a baptism by fire . . . the kind of baptism the Bolsheviks had risked, and may even have sought."<sup>14</sup>

A key question for Soviet historiography has been the role (even the meaning) of ideology. Fitzpatrick does not deduce the flow of Soviet history from ideology, a historiographical practice well established during the cold war by people such as Bertram Wolfe and resurrected in the new modernist school of Martin Malia, Stephen Kotkin, and others, which holds that ideas going back to the Enlightenment or Tomasso Campanello play a key determining role. For the modernists, the Soviet Union flows from an Enlightenment project carried to an extreme. The USSR is a gardening state in which the cultivators plan and plant and brutally cut down the weeds. Fitzpatrick does not neglect the mind-set and preferences of the Bolsheviks. But rather than the Bolsheviks successfully carrying out their ideological aims, she sees their plans as fundamentally utopian fantasies that were thwarted by their clash with reality. There was no international revolution to come to the aid of Russia; the Polish workers did not rise up in 1920 to aid the Red Army; *State and Revolution* was an absurd manual for running a government; *The ABC of Communism*, which depicted a society in which "all will work in accordance with the indications of the statistical bureaux" and where there "will be no need for special ministers of State, for police or prisons, for laws and decrees," was patently improbable. The Bolsheviks talked about ending the exploitation of workers and women, of colonized nationalities, and spreading the revolution to the West, all the while fighting a civil war and dealing with famine and hundreds of thousands of wounded men and women and parentless children. Ideas and understandings were certainly important and had enormous consequences, but in Fitzpatrick's story, they have to be integrated into the social reality that undermined the Bolsheviks at every step. Marxist analysis was inappropriate to Soviet social reality, too crude and too foreign, and, among other errors, led the Bolsheviks into false understandings of the "maturity" of the working class and the development of proletarian consciousness. And Marxist prescriptions for a socialist transformation of Russia

had to be adjusted. "The Bolsheviks," according to Fitzpatrick, "had made an absurd, undeliverable promise to the working class when they talked of a 'dictatorship of the proletariat.' The oxymoron of a 'ruling proletariat,' appealing though it might be to dialectical thinkers, was not realizable in the real world."<sup>15</sup>

Given the heavy-handed practice of both Western sectarians and many Soviet historians, Fitzpatrick's wariness of using Marxist concepts is understandable. A tendency to force Russian society into a rigid structure determined by a quite different historical evolution in the West has more often closed avenues of investigation than offering fruitful new conceptualizations. Fitzpatrick's objections to the practice of past proponents can be understood as an appropriate critique of historical explanations that treated Marxism as an infallible text, a dogma or recipe book, from which prescriptions for analysis and action could be drawn. That text was fixed and scientific. Fitzpatrick opposes notions of historical teleology or fixed laws of history (*zakonomernost'*). In the mid-1970s through the early 1980s, she explored alternative social scientific explanations of Soviet dynamics, influenced by her second husband, the political scientist Jerry Hough. Along with bureaucratic politics and the play of interest groups, she was most interested in the phenomenon of social mobility.

This brings us to a central theme in her work: the concept of "class." Fitzpatrick's own dilemma about class, as she acknowledges, was that it is difficult to do early Soviet history and not take seriously that one concept that the Bolsheviks took very seriously, namely, class, while at the same time not falling victim to their particular classifications. Class was their sociology: society, indeed the world, was divided into antagonistic classes, exploited and exploiting classes. The Soviet dictatorship of the proletariat would not be an egalitarian society; it would favor the exploited classes and wage war against the exploiters and their international allies—a cartoon Lenin sweeping the globe of the bourgeoisie. But soon this dictatorship would change its meaning; instead of "a collective class dictatorship exercised by workers who remained in their old jobs at the factory bench," it became "a dictatorship run by full-time 'cadres' or bosses, in which as many as possible of the new bosses were former proletarians."<sup>16</sup>

Along with her reluctance to accept class as a useful analytical category, one receives from Fitzpatrick's early work two different impressions of class: first, that class is an artificial concept imposed by Marxists on a complexly differentiated social reality; and second, that class is helpful as an objective sociological entity susceptible to such simple forms of analysis as counting. Both of her views were locked in an objective sense of class that missed the quality of human intervention and invention in the making of social categories and identities. As historians and theorists began to suggest that class be seen as one of the social identities available to individuals and groups, either to represent themselves or others, Fitzpatrick moved from a more objective to a more subjective notion of class. Although a history of perceptions would never substitute for social history in her work, she became ever more

influenced by social theory that underlined the importance of ideology, the burdens of *mentalité*, representations, and the limits and restraints of discourse in shaping not only the way people understand their social environment, but also how that environment is produced. But that came later.

Whatever support among the workers the Bolsheviks may have enjoyed in the summer and fall of 1917, they lost the allegiance of significant parts of the working class during the civil war (1918–1921). The disintegration of the working class during the civil war left behind its vanguard “like the smile of the Cheshire cat.”<sup>17</sup> The party, especially at its upper levels, was made up largely of intellectuals and was hardly representative of workers even in its lower ranks. In the absence of either a coherent working class or an adequate class culture, the Bolsheviks were forced to rely on other social groups, such as the so-called bourgeois specialists. Antagonisms (“class tension” in Fitzpatrick’s language) developed between the displaced workers and those who favored using the *spetsy* (experts).

The Bolshevik dilemma of a revolutionary Marxist party holding power in a largely peasant society was to be resolved, in the Bolshevik view, through aid from more advanced countries in Europe—another utopian fantasy as it turned out. Thus the dilemma became acute in the last years of the civil war when despair about the workers gripped many party leaders, including Lenin, and the pointed attacks of the Workers’ Opposition seemed to undermine the very sense of legitimacy of the Marxists who had made the revolution. “By 1920, a large part of the industrial proletariat had disintegrated, and the old capitalist bourgeoisie had been expropriated and ceased to exist as a class. In effect, the great ‘class struggle’ was waged by a surrogate proletariat (the Red Army and the Communist Party) against a surrogate bourgeoisie (the White Armies and the urban intelligentsia).”<sup>18</sup> But just as the impossibility of creating a dictatorship of the proletariat was becoming apparent, a provisional solution was found. The introduction of the NEP encouraged the revival of industry and the reconstitution of the working class in 1923–1924. The “Lenin levy” brought thousands of “workers” into the party, and a class base for Bolshevism was reconstituted in the first half of the 1920s. Rather than trying to achieve a party majority of actual bench workers, the Bolshevik dilemma of proletarian identity was resolved by bringing more former workers into the ruling apparatus.

The Communists “patched up the marriage with the working class” during the NEP years, but during “the First Five-Year Plan, relations soured again because of falling real wages and urban living standards and the regime’s insistent demands for higher productivity. An effective separation from the working class, if not a formal divorce, occurred in the 1930s.”<sup>19</sup> Fitzpatrick’s principal innovation in our thinking about the Soviet working class is that it actually benefited from the Russian Revolution by being recruited into the party, into the educational system, and into management. The Communists “created a broad channel for working-class upward mobility, since the recruitment of workers to party membership went hand in hand with the promotion of working-class Communists to white-collar



administrative and managerial position.... It was not workers that mattered in Stalin's regime but *former* workers—the newly-promoted 'proletariat core' in the managerial and professional elites."<sup>20</sup> This is clearly not what Marx and many Marxists had in mind when they envisioned the dictatorship of the proletariat. Changes in the forces of production and worker upward mobility was not accompanied by any essential changes in the relations of production or empowering the producers. Stalin pushed through a program of affirmative action for workers at the end of the 1920s "a very bold and imaginative policy which did in fact serve to consolidate and legitimize the regime.... [D]espite the relatively short duration of the affirmative action policy, the regime gained lasting credit as a sponsor of upward social mobility. The Bolsheviks never tried to fulfill the Marxist promise that the workers would rule. But they did fulfill a simpler and more comprehensible promise of the revolution—that workers and peasants would have the opportunity to rise into the new ruling elite of the Soviet state."<sup>21</sup>

Even this mildly positive assessment of the fruits of the revolution was enough to have Fitzpatrick accused from the Right of being an apologist for Stalinism and from the Left for not assessing positively enough the promise and potential of the revolution and its betrayal by the Stalinists. For her, the standard Trotskyist formulation of the bureaucracy standing over and dominating society was far too simplistic, for the lower echelons of the bureaucracy were as much dominated as dominating.<sup>22</sup> Fitzpatrick was fascinated by the upward social mobility of the working class into the elite that characterized early Soviet society, and she introduced Western audiences to the *vydvizhentsy* (those thrust upward from the working class).<sup>23</sup> In contrast to those Western scholars, following Trotsky and Isaac Deutscher, who argued that the erosion of the working class was key to the eventual evolution of the Bolshevik regime from a dictatorship of the proletariat to a dictatorship of the bureaucracy, Fitzpatrick contended that the real meaning of the revolution was the coming to power of former workers who occupied the key party and state positions in significant numbers. As she put it in *The Russian Revolution 1917–1932*:

The way in which workers became "masters" of Russian society after the October Revolution was not by an abolition of the old status hierarchy. It was by moving in very large numbers into the old masters' jobs. Thus the essence of the special relationship between the party and the working class after 1917 was that the regime got "cadres" (administrators and managers) from the working class, and workers got responsible, high-status jobs from the regime.... Although it took some time for the Bolshevik leaders (being good Marxists) to realize it, the regime's commitment to the working class had much less to do with workers in situ than with working-class upward mobility....<sup>24</sup>

Fitzpatrick saw the *longue durée* of the revolution as encompassing modernization (escape from backwardness), class (the fate of the workers), and revolutionary violence (how the regime dealt with its enemies).<sup>25</sup> Clustered

together with all its other more ephemeral utopian dreams, the Bolsheviks had two

overriding imperatives to which policy debate continually returned. It was imperative that the Soviet Union should industrialize; and it was imperative that the new regime should create its own elite by promoting and educating workers, peasants and their children. Within the Communist Party, these were universally accepted truths... which had substantial endorsement in the society as a whole, and this must surely be a factor in any explanation of Soviet achievement in these areas.... For the *vydvizhentsy*, industrialization was an heroic achievement—their own, Stalin's and that of Soviet power—and their promotion, linked with the industrialization drive, was a fulfillment of the promises of the revolution.<sup>26</sup>

Even as she focused on the social transformations of the early Soviet years, Fitzpatrick warned against moving too far from ideology and political culture toward the notion (then quite popular) of “improvisation.” Certainly the Bolsheviks built their state on the run, with the materials at hand, and without precise blueprints, but they also did not build a pluralistic, inclusive state but one they proudly proclaimed was a “dictatorship.” Bolsheviks were not Mensheviks, and they certainly were not liberal democrats (even liberal democrats, as her father repeatedly experienced, were often neither liberal nor very democratic). Ideology might be what people “think and say about what they do,” but it is most productively studied in relationship with political practice, “what they do.”<sup>27</sup>

For most people even slightly acquainted with the historiography of the Soviet Union, Sheila Fitzpatrick would be identified as a “revisionist” and a “social historian.” Revisionism in its simplest definition included those scholars (then young) in the late 1960s and through the 1970s who rejected the totalitarian model and sought a more complex (or in the vocabulary of the day, “nuanced”) understanding of Soviet society and politics. While among the strongest advocates of social historical methodologies, from the beginning, Fitzpatrick was critical of certain tendencies among revisionists: Stephen Cohen's sharp distinction between Leninism and Stalinism as completely different phenomena, in his words “an essential discontinuity,” appeared too stark for Fitzpatrick and was expressed too polemically.<sup>28</sup> Here she took a radical middle path between those who, on the one hand, saw an essential continuity between Marxism, Leninism, and Stalinism, an inevitable outgrowth of the system out of its ideological origins, and those, on the other, who spoke of a “revolution betrayed” and viable alternatives. Critical of the older school of historians whose work was often directed at indicting the Soviet experiment, she worried about revisionists moving toward exculpation. Once the initial cohort of revisionists who wrote on 1917 demonstrated that the Bolsheviks had popular support by October and at times proposed radically democratic institutions and practices, even within their own party, another source of Stalinism had to be found: since 1902 and 1917 were no longer sufficient at explaining how the revolution turned out, maybe it

was the civil war, or the peasantry, backwardness, perhaps the bureaucracy? She demurred from those revisionists who sought “to exonerate Lenin and the revolution for responsibility for Stalinism.”<sup>29</sup> Rather than alternatives or roads not taken, she was more interested in what the “revolution fulfilled,” how the coming to power of the working class was realized, not in terms of its dominant position in the state but how that state carried out the industrialization of the country, so enamored by Marxists. In *The Russian Revolution*, she traces “lines of continuity between Lenin’s revolution and Stalin’s.... But the issue here is not whether 1917 and 1929 were alike, but whether they were part of the same process. Napoleon’s revolutionary wars can be included in our general concept of the French Revolution, even if we do not regard them as an embodiment of the spirit of 1789; and a similar approach seems legitimate in the case of the Russian Revolution.”<sup>30</sup> The concept of the revolution ought to include both the originating upheaval and the consolidation of the new regime. Hence, her inclusion of Stalinism in the 1930s as part of the revolution. The Great Terror, she argues, lies at the boundary of the revolution and postrevolutionary Stalinism. In its rhetoric the *Ezhovshchina* (the party purges organized by Nikolai Ezhov) was revolutionary terror, but in its practice “totalitarian terror in that it destroyed persons but not structures, and did not threaten the person of the Leader.” Still, 1937–1938 must be included in the revolution for “dramatic reasons alone.”<sup>31</sup> Along with A. L. Unger and Kendall E. Bailes, Fitzpatrick showed how a new “leading stratum” of Soviet-educated “specialists” replaced the Old Bolsheviks and bourgeois specialists.<sup>32</sup> The largest numbers of beneficiaries were promoted workers and party rank-and-file, young technicians, who would make up the Soviet elite through the post-Stalin period until Gorbachev took power. Stalin, wrote Fitzpatrick, saw the old party bosses less as revolutionaries than “as Soviet boyars (feudal lords) and himself as a latter-day Ivan the Terrible, who had to destroy the boyars to build a modern nation state and a new service nobility.”<sup>33</sup>

The term “Stalinism” has its own genealogy, beginning in the mid-1920s even before the system that would bear its name yet existed. Trotsky applied the word to the moderate “centrist” tendencies within the party stemming from the “ebbing of revolution” and identified them with his opponent, Stalin.<sup>34</sup> By 1935 Trotsky’s use of Stalinism gravitated closer to the Marxist meaning of “Bonapartism” or “Thermidor,” “the crudest form of opportunism and social patriotism.”<sup>35</sup> Even before Trotsky’s murder in August 1940, Stalinism had become a way of characterizing the particular form of social and political organization in the Soviet Union, distinct from capitalism but for Trotskyists and other non-Communist radicals not quite socialist. Not until the falling away of the totalitarian model, however, did scholars bring the term Stalinism into social science discussion as a sociopolitical formation to be analyzed in its own right. For Robert C. Tucker, Stalinism “represented, among other things, a far-reaching Russification of the already somewhat Russified earlier (Leninist) Soviet political culture.”<sup>36</sup> For Stephen F. Cohen, “Stalinism was not simply nationalism, bureaucratization, absence

of democracy, censorship, police repression, and the rest in any precedented sense . . . . Instead Stalinism was excess, extraordinary extremism, in each."<sup>37</sup> Taking a more social historical perspective, Moshe Lewin saw Stalinism "not only a specific and blatant case of development without emancipation," but "in fact, a retreat into a tighter-than-ever harnessing of society to the state bureaucracy, which became the main social vehicle of the state's policies and ethos."<sup>38</sup>

Stalinism was now a way of describing a stage in the evolution of noncapitalist statist regimes in developing countries dominated by a Leninist party, as well as an indictment of undemocratic, failed socialist societies. The cohort of social historians of Stalinism that emerged in the 1980s was not particularly interested in broad synthetic interpretations of Stalinism or Marxist-inspired typologies. Their challenge was directed against the top down, state intervention into society approach and proposed looking primarily at society, while at the same time disaggregating what was meant by society. They looked for initiative from below, popular resistance to the regime's agenda, as well as sources of support for radical transformation.<sup>39</sup> Some stressed the improvisation of state policies, the chaos of the state machinery, the lack of control in the countryside. Others attempted to diminish the role of Stalin. As they painted a picture quite different from the totalitarian vision of effective dominance from above and atomization below, these revisionists came under withering attack from more traditional scholars, who saw them as self-deluded apologists for Stalin at best and incompetent, venal falsifiers at worse.<sup>40</sup>

In her 1986 review of social historical work on Stalinism, Fitzpatrick isolated three approaches within the revisionism challenging the T-model (totalitarianism). The first emphasized "that the regime had less actual control over society than it claimed, that its actions were often improvised rather than part of a grand design, that implementation of its radical policies often diverged from the policy-makers' intentions, and that the policies had many unplanned and unanticipated social consequences."<sup>41</sup> Here the idea of a Stalinist "revolution from above" was preserved, though amplified by reference to social restraints and consequences. The work of Moshe Lewin fits this description. The second approach focused on the social constituencies, responding to social pressures and grievances, and liable to be modified in practice through processes of informal social negotiation.<sup>42</sup> Vera Dunham is an exemplary representative of this approach. And the third approach went furthest of all and argued that the Stalin revolution was more a revolution from below than from above, that popular initiative "from below" was decisive in shaping policies in the 1930s. Gabor Rittersporn made such an argument in his study of the Great Purges.<sup>43</sup> Fitzpatrick came closest to the third approach in her introduction—"Cultural Revolution as Class War"—to her edited volume, *Cultural Revolution in Russia*, in which she emphasized the participation in the revolution of "forces within the society," while conceding that initiative came from above.<sup>44</sup> The radical thrust of that introduction was not carried through by the contributors to the volume, and Fitzpatrick

herself soon shifted toward a recognition of the importance of the “revolution from above.” Her revisionism aimed at finding new ways of interpreting the Soviet past, and she saw herself as an “iconoclastic revisionist” resistant to any orthodoxy, whether it be the T-model or Marxism. She feared the foundation of a revisionist orthodoxy and revisionist scholars who would “take themselves too seriously, exaggerate their contributions, underestimate those of their predecessors, and speak as if they were replacing error with truth.”<sup>45</sup>

In the 1990s, with Soviet archives open and available, Sheila turned to close studies of the everyday life of urban dwellers and peasants under Stalin.<sup>46</sup> These pointillist accounts, careful ethnographic reconstructions of how ordinary people dealt with the tumultuous changes and brutal repressions of the 1930s, must surely be counted as her most original and powerful monographs. Rich in anecdote and telling detail, they were informed by a number of social theories then in vogue: James Scott’s ideas of “everyday resistance” and “hidden transcripts,” the *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday history) school of Alf Ludtke and others, the Subaltern Indian historians, and the work of the sociologist Erving Goffman. These two books, along with accompanying articles, changed the way the profession understood Soviet life under Stalin, bringing the reader down to the household, the family table, the marketplace, and showing us how people survived and made out in an economy of chronic shortage, a political arena marked by a relentlessly expanding state, the elimination of older forms of social support like the church, severe disruptions of traditional networks and hierarchies, and blows to the family. Over time, class became less meaningful than it had been in the revolution and 1920s. This was social history with the state as a hulking presence. “What mattered was the relationship to the state—in particular, the state as an allocator of goods in an economy of chronic scarcity. . . . [P]roduction no longer served as a meaningful basis of class structure in Soviet urban society. In fact, the meaningful social hierarchies of the 1930s were based not on production but consumption. ‘Class’ status in the real world was a matter of having greater or lesser access to goods, which in turn was largely a function of the degree of entitlement to privilege that the state allowed.”<sup>47</sup> In these works, there is no apology for the horrors that ordinary people in the USSR had to endure in the 1930s; genuine heroism had been replaced by official heroes and heroics; and the sacrifices and suffering were all the more unbearable. But somehow people managed. “There were fearful things that affected Soviet life,” she wrote, “and visions that uplifted it, but mostly it was a hard grind, full of shortages and discomfort. *Homo sovieticus* was a string-puller, an operator, a time-server, a freeloader, a mouther of slogans, and much more. But above all, he was a survivor.”<sup>48</sup> In a later article published in Australia, she noted that happiness was part of the official script, the acceptable public expression of positive emotion, “a kind of civic requirement,” while grief, suffering, and *toska* (melancholic longing) were decidedly non-Soviet emotions that “might carry overtones of ingratitude, even disloyalty, to the beneficent state.”<sup>49</sup> They were the private expression

of feelings found in diaries. In Fitzpatrick's vision of everyday Soviet life, themes of achievements and legitimacy had been left far behind, and the personal suffering and misery of the ordinary Soviet men and women had been now brought to the fore.

By the early and mid-1990s, the social historical wave had receded, and cultural history became "the dominant force in the modern Russian historical field,"<sup>50</sup> though a new interest in political history, enriched by the available archives, also was lapping at the shore. Fitzpatrick's work continued to express the variety of Soviet experiences. Her work on class identities flowed naturally into a concern with the conventions of self-presentation and the reinvention of personae in revolutionary and postrevolutionary societies. In her coedited volume on Soviet women with Yuri Slezkine, she emphasized how diverse the life paths of the memoirists were. Soviet subjectivity cannot be captured with a single diary or encapsulated in an easy formula. While the subjectivity enthusiasts were concerned with individual identities and sensibilities, Fitzpatrick remained concerned with collective responses.

Fitzpatrick began to deconstruct the notion of class in a stunning series of articles that paralleled the work that feminists were doing with gender categories and theorists of nationalism were doing with the nation. Class as "a matter of classification" presented a far more intriguing problem to her than the idea of class as a reified social category. For the Bolsheviks, identification with the proletariat was an ideological sine qua non, but in actuality, as Fitzpatrick emphasized, that identity in any meaningful sociological sense became a mirage soon after October. After the revolution, people needed to fashion new identities and even to challenge the identities of others. In her work on denunciations, she investigated how individual Soviet citizens attempted "to discredit the class self-presentation of others."<sup>51</sup> This led to investigations of petitions and appeals in which people tried to present themselves with positive class identities complete with life stories.

While already previewed in earlier pieces, the turning point in her work on class came with the 1994 piece in *The Journal of Modern History* (of which she was one of the editors), "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia."<sup>52</sup> In this article, she showed how the Marxist idea of class as positioning in relation to the means of production gave way to state ascription of class belonging that was akin to the prerevolutionary classification of the population by *soslovie* (legal estate). The Bolsheviks essentially invented class categories in the absence of actual, clear class identifications and turned them into legal categories that afforded people particular advantages and disadvantages. What is most dramatic in this picture is the active construction of social reality by the state, the making of class in the absence of clear class positions or class consciousness (*pace* the work of Edward P. Thompson). While it is easy enough to trace the genealogy of such an approach to the work of Leopold H. Haimson on social identities, Gregory Freeze on *soslovie*, Moshe Lewin on the artificial category of the *kulak* (rich peasant), Teodor Shanin on the awkwardness of applying class analysis to the peasantry (and, if I might add immodestly, Ron Suny on the

state production of nationality), Fitzpatrick's story is rich in its emphasis on "class stigma," the real costs of being ascribed to the wrong class. Once ascribed to a class, which might become an alien class, which then became an enemy class, the identity became indelible, fixed on passports (or not worthy of receiving a passport), the consequences could be catastrophic, literally a matter of life and death. Class ascription helped solidify a new social hierarchy in Stalin's Soviet Union. A new elite with new privileges, a kind of "service nobility," emerged, a *soslovie* that would remain in power almost to the last days of the USSR.

Reading through Fitzpatrick's corpus, one is struck foremost by her inventiveness, her constant exploration of new materials and new ways of interrogating them, her deep interest in variation as well as constancies. For those like myself who tend to think of history as a special form of science—a *nauka* (science; a field of study) that is about discovery, as in ecology or biology, of variations—and a social science—that is about regularities, patterns, and generalizations, if not universal or natural laws—Fitzpatrick's work, like all good science, moves our understanding forward by producing new knowledge of change and constancy over time. When she takes up a question like the forms of citizen's supplications to state authority, her apparent pleasure in discovery is matched by her consideration of their various genres: *ispoved* (confession) of "what is in my heart," cries for help, denunciations, complaints, opinions, suggestions, advice, and the particular form of the *annonimka* (anonymous letter). She notes the regularities in language, in greetings, and the consistent performative elements. In the debate between the modernists and the neotraditionalists, Fitzpatrick is closer to the neotraditionalists, such as Terry Martin (though I am sure that once she reads this she may reconsider her position . . . Or nuance it). Her investigations on patron/client networks, *blat* (favors), *proteksii* (patronage), *semeistvennost'* (family connections) show the persistence of older practices even in the throes of modernization. Family bonds were strengthened in the 1930s (despite what we supposedly learned about Pavl Morozov), rather than becoming atomized or individualized. The only sexual offense to feature frequently in denunciations, even after homosexuality was outlawed in 1934, was female promiscuity. Denunciation was a practice, like patronage and favoritism, that operated where law and bureaucracy functioned poorly. Russia and the Soviet Union may have been modernizing; the regime may have had a modernist ideology; but when the rubber industry hit the muddy dirt road, older ways of doing things found a new life.

What about theory? This is a difficult question (*shchekotlivyi vopros*). Fitzpatrick has expressed her "low tolerance for totalizing theory, including Marxist and Foucauldian (though sharing with Marx an ingrained suspicion of ideology as false consciousness)."<sup>53</sup> I can confess to my own frustration during my first years in the University of Chicago Russian History Workshop with the general hostility to theory, especially Marxism, that pervaded many discussions. Historians in general tend to be atheoretical in contrast to anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists, and there I was

a superannuated student of political science, pulled by my home department in one direction and the association with die-hearted empiricists in the workshop in another. I frequently tried to insinuate some social science, Foucault, or Marx into the discussion, sometimes against considerable skepticism. Over time, resistance faded away—less due to any particular pressure from me and more due to general trends in the profession like the cultural turn and the turn away from the cultural turn that impelled students to think through the larger epistemological issues posed by theorists and historians in other national fields. The study of history, while suspicious of, if not hostile to, the methodological individualism (rational choice), quantification, and formal modeling of political science, was imbibing the concerns with language, representations, subjectivities, and self-reflexivity of anthropology, historical sociology, and literary studies in particular.

Rather than being a producer of theory, Sheila Fitzpatrick is a consumer, an employer, and deployer of theory. Her instincts, it seems to me, take her to the concrete, the particular, the empirically and archivally demonstrable. But she does not stop there: rather than just cheese and worms, she makes sense of diversity and variety, finds patterns and meanings, and enriches our understanding as any good botanist would do in a rain forest.

The question has been posed: is there a Sheila Fitzpatrick school of Soviet history?<sup>54</sup> After all, her considerable achievements and the training of a generation of students at the University of Texas and the University of Chicago certainly auger the formation of such a school. The first question to be asked about the question is: what is a school? Arguably, the cadre (to use a favorite Soviet word) of historians who came out of her courses and workshops make up a stellar generation of scholars teaching and training themselves another generation of historians. But do these scholars share a single approach to history, a common intellectual agenda, be it social history or the history of categories or a hostility to the Marxist concept of class? On first glance, it is not easy even to argue that two historians of Soviet nationalities policies such as Yuri Slezkine and Terry Martin—one who deals with discourses and representations among other things and the other who focuses on policies and institutions—employ a common approach to their shared subject. School, it appears, is too narrow a term to encompass the variation among Fitzpatrick's students or the colleagues most influenced by her.

What distinguishes both Sheila Fitzpatrick's scholarship and teaching has been its broadness, inclusiveness, willingness to adapt to, and adopt new approaches and evidence. There is no orthodoxy here, no commitment to a single explanation. Consistently committed to varieties of approaches to history rather than confirming or disconfirming a particular model or paradigm, she moved from studies of bureaucracy through social history on to cultural study of discourses and categories, from the world of what is to what does it mean, and explored emotions and the everyday. When one reads through her work, one finds a rich, complex story of the Soviet experience that defies reduction to a formula. She eschews the idea that there is a magic key, an essential factor, that explains the changing complexities of the Soviet



experience—be it the totalitarian model, *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin's or Stalin's personality, or, as has more recently become fashionable, modernity. If that openness and commitment to hard thinking about hard problems constitutes a school, then one could argue there is a Fitzpatrick school, but such broad inclusiveness would belie the very notion of a school. A more fruitful question might be: what characterizes the work of Sheila Fitzpatrick and in which ways are those qualities captured in the work of one, more, or many of her students and colleagues?

The first characteristic both of Fitzpatrick and the great majority of her students is the affection for, the infatuation with, the archives. Even before it was customary or easy for Western historians of the USSR to use Soviet archives, she managed to push through the door, overcome the myriad obstacles placed in her way, and endure the tedium necessary to find the gems that gave clues and insights to a darkly understood society. Her work builds from the ground up, not from grand theory or master narrative or modernist or Marxist teleology, but from the sources, is very often ethnographic, the fieldwork done largely in the archives. While archives are certainly central to the work of those students and colleagues most closely associated with Sheila Fitzpatrick, more of them have worked with institutions and legislation—nationalities policies, laws on property—or the history of collectivities—musicians, doctors, veterans, journalists—than in the mosaic reconstruction of the daily lives of ordinary people, as in her two groundbreaking books on Stalin's peasants and the urban population. In the Chicago workshop, there was no orthodoxy, no insistence on conformity, and no unchallenged hierarchy—as Richard Hellie and I can both attest. We were all students, Sheila Fitzpatrick not least of all.

The second characteristic of Fitzpatrick and many of those closest to her illustrates one of the great ironies of our profession. While Sheila has been vilified as an apologist of the Soviet project, even a Stalinist, while she has been calumniated by the most conservative critics of Soviet historiographical revisionism for changing her mind over time, the great consistency in her work has been a coolness rather than an emotional attachment to the USSR or Marxism, on the one hand, and a reluctance to adopt the easy Soviet-bashing of aspiring organic intellectuals of the American state, on the other. Here again her students and close colleagues have shared with her a critical attitude toward the practices and aspirations of the Soviet regime but not the visceral hatred or disdain that passed for judgment in the cold war years.

Sheila Fitzpatrick has called herself a British-style “positivist at heart,” who believes “that historians ought to keep their value judgments and prejudices out of their writing.” History may be subjective but one must strive to discipline “the subjective impulse.” She is against “ponderous scholasticism,” “semantic orthodoxy (conformity to a particular intellectual jargon),” and ideologies of all sorts. She does not see teleological progress in history but a great cycle “where one relative truth succeeds another in a sequence that is not pre-determined.”<sup>55</sup>

Her first foray into Russian history in Melbourne as an undergraduate was an honors thesis on Soviet music. Music has been a big part of her life and has given her great pleasure, companionship, even solace at hard times. Many of those who were at Chicago at the time remember how important her playing in the University of Chicago orchestra was after the loss of Michael Danos, her beloved "Misha," a faithful attendee at the Russian History Workshop. She enjoyed making music with her friends and even, on occasion, with her students. At Chicago, she made a wonderful kind of music with those in the weekly workshops. There she worked through sometime cacophony toward some kind of harmony, tolerant of dissonance, trying to find the right note. Fidelity to evidence was the right key in which to play. And new melodies were always being sought. "Historical interpretation," she once wrote, "means finding patterns. But none of these patterns fit completely, so we keep looking for new ones."<sup>56</sup>

If there is one conclusion to be made about her work to date, it is that Sheila Fitzpatrick is always learning; she is always open to new ideas, new ways of looking at the world, new challenges to comfortable orthodoxies. Even in her most un-Marxist moments, she would probably feel quite at home with one of Marx's dictums, which he probably borrowed from Aristotle: "Doubt everything."

## NOTES

1. Don Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick A Radical Life* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), p. xvii.
2. Ibid., pp. xx, xvii. "If Fitzpatrick's initial affection for Russia stemmed from faith in the revolution, his continuing defence of it in the face of overwhelming evidence of appalling aberrations was sustained by his distaste for the politics of its detractors. Rationality suffered on more than one score: not only did anti-communism serve to shore up the irrationalities of capitalism but it took a quite irrational attitude to Russia. To paint Russia as all bad was to be as unreasonable as the *apparatchiks* who painted it as all good." (p. 213)
3. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Diary," *London Review of Books*, XXIX, 3 (February 8, 2007), p. 34.
4. Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick A Radical Life*, p. 255.
5. *The Australian News-Review. Brian Fitzpatrick's Monthly Digest of Australian, U.N., World Events*, III, 20 (May 1953), p. 3.
6. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "A Student in Moscow, 1966," *The Wilson Quarterly*, VI, 3 (Summer 1982), p. 134.
7. Ibid., p. 135.
8. Ibid., p. 141.
9. "A. V. Lunacharsky: Recent Soviet Interpretations and Republications," *Soviet Studies*, XVIII, 3 (January 1967), p. 270.
10. Ibid., p. 289.
11. Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power: The Revolution of 1917 in Petrograd* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), pp. 313–314.
12. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution, 1917–1932*, 2nd ed., p. 67.
13. Ibid., p. 71.

14. Ibid., p. 72.
15. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Bolsheviks' Dilemma: Class, Culture and Politics in the Early Soviet Years," *Slavic Review*, XLVII, 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 599–613.
16. Ibid., p. 92.
17. "The Bolsheviks' Dilemma: The Class Issue in Party Politics and Culture," in Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 19.
18. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "New Perspectives on the Civil War," in Diane P. Koenker, William G. Rosenberg, and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds.), *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in Social History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 6.
19. *The Russian Revolution*, 2nd ed., pp. 10–11.
20. Ibid., p. 11.
21. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 16–17.
22. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "New Perspectives on Stalinism," *Russian Review*, XLV, 4 (October 1986), p. 361–362.
23. This is a central motif in Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*.
24. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution 1917–1932* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 8.
25. Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 2nd ed., pp. 9–13. Fitzpatrick's interpretation of the revolution took a darker tone in the second edition, published after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Revolution here is about illusions and disillusion, euphoria, madness, and unrealized expectations (pp. 8–9).
26. Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, p. 254.
27. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Politics as Practice: Thoughts on a New Soviet Political History," *Kritika*, V, 1 (Winter 2004), p. 37.
28. Ibid., p. 50.
29. Fitzpatrick, "New Perspectives on the Civil War," p. 388.
30. *The Russian Revolution*, 2nd ed., p. 3.
31. Ibid., p. 4.
32. A. L. Unger, "Stalin's Renewal of the Leading Stratum: A Note on the Great Purge," *Soviet Studies*, XX, 3 (January 1969), pp. 321–330; Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society Under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917–1941* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 268, 413.; Fitzpatrick, "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite," *Slavic Review*, XXXVIII, 3 (September 1979), pp. 377–402.
33. Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, p. 159.
34. Robert H. McNeal, "Trotskyist Interpretations of Stalinism," in Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 31.
35. Ibid., p. 34.
36. Robert C. Tucker, "Introduction: Stalinism and Comparative Communism," in Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism*, p. xviii.
37. Stephen F. Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," in Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism*, p. 12.
38. Lewin, "The Social Background of Stalinism," in Tucker (ed.), *Stalinism*, p. 126.
39. For a bold attempt to find support for state policies from below, see Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978).

40. See, for example, Richard Pipes, *Vixi, Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 126, 221–223, 242.
41. Fitzpatrick, “New Perspectives on Stalinism,” *Russian Review*, XLV, 4 (October 1986), p. 368.
42. Ibid.
43. Gábor Tamás Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933–1953* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic, 1991).
44. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Cultural Revolution in Russia*, pp. 8–40.
45. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Afterword: Revisionism Revisited,” *Russian Review*, XLV, 4 (October 1986), p. 412.
46. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
47. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp. 12–13.
48. Ibid., p. 227.
49. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Happiness and *Toska*: An Essay in the History of Emotions in Pre-war Soviet Russia,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, L, 3, (2004), pp. 357–371; 371.
50. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “A Response to Michael Ellman,” *Europe/Asia Studies*, LIX, 3 (2002), p. 475.
51. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 8.
52. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” *Journal of Modern History*, LXV, 4 (December 1993), pp. 745–770.
53. Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!*, p. 8.
54. The following section of this essay is taken from my contribution to “Roundtable: What is a School? Is There a Fitzpatrick School of Soviet History?” *Acta Slavica Japonica*, XXIV, pp. 240–241.
55. Fitzpatrick, “Afterword: Revisionism Revisited,” pp. 411, 410, 412.
56. Ibid., p. 412.

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## CHAPTER 2

### SHEILA FITZPATRICK: AN INTERPRETIVE ESSAY

*Julie Hessler*

Sheila Fitzpatrick is, by any standard, one of the most important interpreters of Soviet history. For nearly forty years, her scholarship has been obligatory reading for students of the field. Her production has been formidable, amounting to some eighty articles and seven books, with as many more edited collections. Her forays into textbook writing and general readership essays have made her name synonymous with Soviet history to a wider reading public.

She is also my teacher, and my own relationship to her work is ambiguous. As her doctoral student at University of Chicago in the 1990s, I learned virtually everything I knew about the Soviet Union either directly from her or through independent reading under her supervision. Her training in Soviet sources was a pivotal part of my education. Her criticisms of my writing (almost preternaturally prompt) gave me the benefit of her many insights into the Soviet past as well as ideas of possible sources and her understanding of the historian's craft. Her Soviet history workshop, with its lively sparring and conviviality, remains my ideal of scholarly interchange. Beyond that, we have had many conversations, then and since, about Soviet history and other things. My engagement with Sheila's work, in other words, has always been mediated by my personal relationship to Sheila; and, like many scholars who have emerged from under the shadow of a great teacher, I suspect, I have always found it easier to pinpoint what differentiates my thinking from hers than where she has directly influenced my ideas. I could readily identify affinities; but were they the result of her influence or were they more basic effects of my own, and her, intellectual temperaments?

I do not try to answer these questions in this essay, which is centered solely on Sheila Fitzpatrick, but I have looked forward to the opportunity to think about her scholarship at some distance from the graduate school setting. How does it speak to me now? More specifically, how did her work

evolve? Ron Suny, in the preceding chapter, stresses Fitzpatrick's exploration of a variety of historical approaches as she has assimilated the trends of the history profession at large; her projects have thus taken her from institutional and bureaucratic history through social history to cultural studies of discourse and, most recently, emotions and everyday life. This is certainly an accurate portrayal of her oeuvre. Yet my response to a systematic reading and rereading of a number of Fitzpatrick's works was in some ways the opposite: what struck me was their overall interpretive, thematic, and stylistic unity. Each of her major research projects grew directly out of previous projects, though professional fashions and changing access to sources also left their mark. Her interventions into historiographical disputes, it seems to me, were also prompted by preexisting interests, as opposed to her agenda having been determined by professional debates. In this essay, I have tried to trace her intellectual trajectory in relation to a few of her enduring interests: the role of social class in Soviet history; the links between individual and society and between individuals and the state in the revolutionary and Stalin periods; Soviet culture; the character of the intelligentsia and its relationship to the Soviet regime. I also comment on some of the general contributions that Sheila has made to the field in such areas as source awareness, introduction of young scholars, agenda setting, and style.

I take as my starting point the Fitzpatrick of the late 1970s to the late 1980s, a period that marked the takeoff of her career and her emergence as a leading voice of "revisionist" historians. In the space of a decade, Fitzpatrick published her monograph *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*,<sup>1</sup> her synthesis *The Russian Revolution*,<sup>2</sup> most of the articles later included in her essay collection *The Cultural Front*,<sup>3</sup> among others, and the programmatic introduction to the widely-read volume she edited, *Cultural Revolution in Russia*.<sup>4</sup> A further programmatic piece, "New Perspectives on Stalinism," triggered a firestorm on the pages of *Russian Review* in 1986.<sup>5</sup> Later in the 1980s, she authored the agenda-setting essay "New Perspectives on the Russian Civil War" for the volume *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War*.<sup>6</sup> This period saw Fitzpatrick's turn from cultural politics to the study of society, as well as her movement forward in time. Her first book, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*,<sup>7</sup> had centered on the immediate aftermath of 1917, but by 1979, when she wrote the first edition of *The Russian Revolution*, she had come to view the First Five-Year Plan period as part of a revolutionary process extending from 1917 to 1932.

The specific issue that absorbed her during the 1970s was the question of social support for the regime. On the one hand, Fitzpatrick viewed social support for the Bolsheviks as against their opponents as the key determinant of the outcome of the revolution; the politics of the civil war years, not to mention purely military aspects of the Red and White campaigns, played, in her estimation, a secondary role. On the other hand, the relationship between the Bolsheviks and their presumed constituency was, from a very early point, strained. Workers, particularly the radicalized workers of the capital cities, had undoubtedly helped to make the Bolshevik revolution

possible, but, as many commentators prior to Fitzpatrick had noted, the Bolsheviks proceeded to renege on the promises of worker democracy in both the factory and the polity. The Bolsheviks were often alleged to have “betrayed” the revolution, and more specifically the workers, almost before they had stabilized their government, and most certainly by the time of the 1921 Kronstadt revolt. The problem, from Fitzpatrick’s point of view, was that no government, no matter how dictatorial, could exist for long without some degree of consent from the governed, but the value-laden language of “betrayal” closed off inquiry into the nature of the Soviet social compact. Adding to the puzzle was the objective weakening of the working class after October by workers’ conscription into the Red Army, flight to the countryside, and the idling of the factories. Was this amputated working class sufficient as a source of support for the Soviet regime? To what extent did the Bolsheviks rely on the “bourgeois specialists,” whom they coopted into service as officers of the Red Army, factory technicians, and economic agents, as social allies? Who else served that role?

The answer that Fitzpatrick developed in such works as “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite”<sup>8</sup> and *Education and Social Mobility* combined social history with an interpretation of the Bolsheviks’ political evolution from 1921 to the early 1930s and beyond. Though the Soviet Union was traditionally depicted as a strong state, it was in fact weak and overstretched throughout the 1920s. Bolshevik leaders were acutely aware of this weakness, and the formative experience of the civil war led them to translate weakness into a threat. Kronstadt, from this perspective, was not evidence of the Bolsheviks’ betrayal of the revolution but rather a source of Bolshevik disillusionment with the working class. The only truly reliable pillar of support was the Communist Party itself, and Communist Party members were young, undereducated, hostile to NEP-style compromises with the “class enemy,” and quick to resort to coercion as a means of administration. Meanwhile, industrialization and modernization, which had acquired increasing urgency, required a different kind of cadre. Fitzpatrick outlined a long-term strategy on the part of the Bolsheviks for solving the needs of an industrializing economy while simultaneously bolstering social support: mass education and promotion of workers into the Party and into the administrative jobs that Party membership opened up. By liberating the Bolsheviks from reliance on active manual laborers, whose interests inevitably ran counter to the state interest in economic modernization and efficiency, as well as from the bourgeois specialists, the policy could attract working-class supporters by offering individual strivers a real prospect of upward mobility. It had a generational component, as Fitzpatrick pointed out; the revolution itself had been something of a youth movement, and in the later 1920s and early 1930s, it was urban youth who flooded into the technical colleges and universities to take advantage of preferential admissions. Technically literate, indebted to the regime that had given them the opportunity to rise above their social origins, these “*vydvizhentsy*” (newly promoted workers) in turn lent the Party a working-class complexion. Catapulted into positions of



authority during Stalin's purges, they enabled millions of other young workers to identify the Soviet regime with their own aspirations.

Fitzpatrick's inquiry into the social support for Soviet communism formed the basis of a much broader advocacy of "history from below." Reacting against the Soviet history field's preoccupation with how the Soviet state terrorized and controlled its subjects (as she put it in a recent essay, "Soviet historians of my generation and the one that followed it [the social historians of the 1970s and the 1980s] often had a particular distaste for politics in reaction to the dominance of political scientists and Cold War attitudes in Sovietology"?)<sup>9</sup>, Fitzpatrick argued for "new perspectives" on revolutionary Russia and Stalinism that would problematize the relationship between the state and social groups. Of course, this agenda was partly conditioned by the limitations on historical research: the continuing unavailability of high-level Soviet archives made a detailed reconstruction of political decision-making impossible, whereas statistics and other Soviet publications, the nonclassified archives that were starting to be made available to Western researchers, and the captured Smolensk Archive potentially offered more insight into low-level politics and social trends. More importantly, "history from below" promised to revitalize the field with questions whose answers were either overdetermined by the totalitarian model or overlooked. Who benefited from the Soviet system and how did ordinary people cope with its opportunities and constraints? What were the channels of communication between state and society and to what extent did social interests influence the exercise of power?

As these questions suggest, the social history that Fitzpatrick envisioned in the early 1980s remained firmly anchored to politics. In the later 1980s, while she continued to investigate the social-political nexus, society itself increasingly took center stage. A problem that has framed much of her scholarship since that time is the relationship between the individual and the collective as the subject of history. Like most social historians, Fitzpatrick emphasized the need to filter social experiences through social groups, but that raised the question of which groups should form the object of study. She quickly became dissatisfied with class as an analytical subject, because of both its evident politicization in the Soviet context and the crudeness of such a broad category. In her programmatic essays of the 1980s, she seemed to suggest that the way forward for social historians would lie in an examination of ever narrower cohorts.<sup>10</sup> In practice, Fitzpatrick was temperamentally ill-suited to this prescription. Since narrow cohorts lend themselves most readily to narrow conclusions, it is not surprising that she opted for larger collectives in her own research. Theoretical reservations notwithstanding, Fitzpatrick's seminal account of the Russian peasantry in the 1930s, *Stalin's Peasants*,<sup>11</sup> could be described as a study of a class, while the focus of *Everyday Stalinism*,<sup>12</sup> the companion volume for urban Russia, is a group best encapsulated by the term *meshchanstvo*—the large and ill-defined prerevolutionary estate including most of the poor and middling strata of townspeople.

Though framed around very large social categories, these books bore the imprint of the theoretical concerns that had preoccupied Fitzpatrick since the mid-1980s, and above all, the problem of class. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, undoubtedly influenced by the trend toward cultural history in the broader historical profession, Fitzpatrick explored the analytical status of social class for Soviet history in two important articles, "The Bolsheviks' Dilemma" and "Ascribing Class."<sup>13</sup> Her starting point was the observation that class was a fundamental structuring element of social and political reality in the early Soviet period, and accordingly had to be taken seriously by the scholar. It was, however, a "constructed" category rather than an "objective" category rooted in relations of production. In part, determinations of social class were constructed by Bolshevik officials, whose social policy was predicated on their ability to sort out natural allies, whom they could cultivate and promote, from "class enemies." In broad strokes, this policy derived from the Bolsheviks' Marxist ideology, but beyond the initial ideological impulse, Fitzpatrick emphasized the practical challenges of shoehorning a messy social reality, so recently rent and reordered by revolution and civil war, into neat categorical divisions. Bolshevik officials constructed class in its application to particular citizens because they had to—they were told that class mattered, but it was not so obvious who belonged where.

More significant for Fitzpatrick's intellectual trajectory was the insight that the Bolsheviks' categories of class were not simply imposed on a prostrate society, but were also constructed, on a societal-wide scale, by individuals striving to find and improve their place in the new order. Class was an identity, a term that in Fitzpatrick's usage referred less to an individual's self-understanding than to the sense of self that he or she projected to others, and moreover it was a singularly valuable identity in the self-proclaimed "proletarian state." Individuals accordingly sought to acquire a positive class identity through a selective reading of their past lives and optimistic projection into the future. Fitzpatrick's conception here was colored by her empirical research of the 1970s, which had focused on social mobility. The single most important impediment to assigning people to "objective" class categories, she felt, was the inability of the latter to account for the lifecycle. People performed various roles in the economy and society at different stages of their lives, and the upheavals of the revolutionary period only widened the range of politically relevant experiences and accelerated the turnover of economic and political roles. After the revolution, with the systematic favoring of certain of these roles and experiences over others, people were bound to try to put forward a class identity based on their "best" roles.

Fitzpatrick's analysis of the politics of identity bears comparison to the scholarship of Moshe Lewin, whose memorable phrase "the quicksand society" captured the social flux of the first two decades of Soviet rule. Training attention on social mobility or flux as a central characteristic of this period, and one which, moreover, was not under any effective state control, these two scholars did more than anyone else to smash the notions of a strict dichotomy between state and society and of an omnipotent Party-state.

By the late 1980s, however, they took this concept in very different directions. Though Lewin is often numbered among the pioneers of social history in the Soviet field, social flux remained, for him, a key to understanding crucial aspects of Bolshevik and Stalinist political culture, such as the degradation of the intellectual level of Soviet politics after the revolution or the Bolsheviks' inability to find successful alternatives to coercion in their relations with peasants.<sup>14</sup> For Fitzpatrick, by contrast, social flux increasingly formed the backdrop to the actions of ordinary individuals; it shed light on the openings that the Soviet system presented to individuals to fashion an identity and make a career.

Again, her next book-length studies, *Stalin's Peasants* and *Everyday Stalinism*, were based on class or collective experiences, but already implicit in the turn toward identity was a step away from the collective to the individual as the focus of social historical inquiry. Fitzpatrick's 2005 book *Tear Off the Masks!*, much of which was published in article form over the preceding decade, marks the endpoint of this evolution. It takes a microscopic approach to Soviet society, with chapters devoted to a single individual, or at most a very small group, only loosely integrated into an overarching argument about Soviet social dynamics. With respect to both the kinds of individuals she chose to study and the kind of analysis she employs, Fitzpatrick's approach differs markedly from the recent turn to the individual by such younger scholars as Jochen Hellbeck or Igal Halfin. As against Fitzpatrick's concept of identity, these scholars explore subjectivity; as against her emphasis on the instrumental manipulation of official categories by Soviet citizens, these scholars have probed the ways that communist ideology and political practices permeated and shaped individuals' consciousness.<sup>15</sup> Though she does not explicitly frame her work against theirs (rather, in the introduction to *Tear Off the Masks!*, she portrays it as complementary<sup>16</sup>), she has implicitly mounted a vigorous defense of the very "liberal subject" that Anna Krylova disparages as culturally alien to the USSR: a subject motivated by the pursuit of self-interest, and above all, material gain.<sup>17</sup>

A distinctive feature of Fitzpatrick's approach to individuals is her tendency to read their written effects against the grain. Whereas Hellbeck, Halfin, and Krylova look to words as testimony to an individual's inner thoughts and mental frameworks, Fitzpatrick seeks ulterior motives and hidden agendas. Actions, for her, are more significant than words—a view evident in some of her earliest writings on Bolshevik politics as well as more recent works—for words, especially words spoken or written in situations where self-presentation mattered, concealed as much as they revealed.<sup>18</sup> Her interest in "masking" and in the distinctive speech acts of Soviet culture derives from this view of individuals, and although she uses individuals to explore these issues, her central problem is not so much to develop a deeper understanding of her subjects' consciousness as to assess the societal ramifications of changing the avenues through which individuals could pursue their interests. When the Bolsheviks shut off some traditional channels for the pursuit of self-interest, such as business activity, other channels had to open up to accommodate this

basic and unalterable human instinct, Fitzpatrick surmised. More meaningfully than class, she suggests, these channels formed the connection between the individual and the social as structuring elements of the new Soviet order. Among them, she especially highlights the role of certain types of speech act, such as denunciations, petitions, and autobiographies, as well as the opportunities for career advancement, such as education, Party or Komsomol membership, or newly created bureaucratic posts, which she had emphasized in her earlier research.

Fitzpatrick's work provides a helpful reminder that rational, instrumental, self-interested behavior was a major feature of Soviet society (and, by implication, of any society). Critiques of the liberal subject notwithstanding, the idea that most people, most of the time, were pursuing their interests, and that they sought out avenues for doing so, is a pretty good starting point for interpreting Soviet citizens' actions. It is not, however, an ending point. Fitzpatrick has been signally less interested in other motivations, though "passions" surely moved her subjects as well. Fitzpatrick's subjects do occasionally appear to act on passion, but within an exceptionally narrow emotional and psychological register.<sup>19</sup> Malice and envy feature prominently in her interpretation of the peasantry, for example; *Stalin's Peasants* is replete with stories of peasant feuds, hardheartedness, and malice, before collectivization as well as afterwards, that cumulatively undermine any romantic notion of the idyllic peasant community. This emphasis on the negative places Fitzpatrick in a long tradition of critics of Russian peasant life, but unlike the vast majority of them, she does not ascribe causal significance to peasant "backwardness." Following the Bolsheviks themselves, as well as their forebears in the "To the People" movement of the 1870s, most critics of the Russian peasantry have counterposed peasant "darkness" (barbarism, ignorance, superstition, and so forth), to the enlightenment and modern values embodied in the intelligentsia, the Party, or, at the very least, the contemporary scholarly audience.<sup>20</sup> Fitzpatrick's historical vision offers no such redeemer. Earnest, idealistic souls scarcely make an appearance in her oeuvre, while Soviet Victorians, *Kulturträger*, and champions of moral uplift are quoted with irony, their highmindedness dismissed as a cover for baser emotions and desires.

Fitzpatrick's dark view of human nature is not limited to her Soviet subjects, as a recent autobiographical essay reveals. Describing the taunts she endured at school as an "oddball," along with such other victims as orphans and Jews, she remarks, "It was an early lesson that people are naturally mean."<sup>21</sup> In the same vein:

My father described himself as a socialist, but I could never find out exactly what socialism meant, either. On the basis of my school experience, not to mention my experience at home, the idea that people could live happily and cooperatively together under socialism, or under any circumstances, seemed absurd: people either enjoyed causing each other pain, as at school, or couldn't help it, as at home.<sup>22</sup>

Culture, in this vision, is a superstructure over much deeper human instincts, from cruelty to avarice to a craving for status, that unite “us” with them, the Russians. Stressing the universality of human nature, Fitzpatrick has only occasionally highlighted the roots of Soviet culture in the Russian cultural heritage, thematized by such scholars as Catriona Kelly or Stephen Lovell.<sup>23</sup> Nor has she accepted the view promoted by Stephen Kotkin, Amir Weiner, and others of the fundamental similarity between the Soviet state and Western democratic states.<sup>24</sup> In Fitzpatrick’s version, the state is different, but people are the same; it was the Soviet state’s (and above all the Communist Party’s) distinctive prescriptions and proscriptions that channeled the raw material of human nature into a new culture, with characteristic forms of expression, modes of interaction, identities, and lifestyles. In this sense, a homology exists between her interpretation of Soviet history and the “neotraditionalism” model espoused by her former students Terry Martin and Matthew Lenoe.<sup>25</sup> But the fit is not exact, both because of Fitzpatrick’s aversion to model-building and because of her much stronger appreciation than theirs of the agency of individuals—society writ small—in testing limits, finding safety valves, and determining the ultimate shape of Soviet culture.

Fitzpatrick’s approach to high culture—intellectuals, their ideas, and the arts—reflects the same antecedent assumptions. Soviet intellectuals, in her rendering, are human, all too human: rarely martyrs, as often participants in persecution as victims of it, given to self-aggrandizement, vanity, and envy, always angling for material perquisites, status, and authority, while simultaneously representing themselves as unsullied by politics or material concerns. Commenting on this depiction of intellectuals at some remove (most of her writings on intellectuals and high culture date from the 1970s or before), Fitzpatrick notes: “This was surely connected with my private equation of my father and Soviet dissidents, which of course put Soviet dissidents in rather a bad light.”<sup>26</sup> Although Fitzpatrick had not yet traveled down the road that led from class to identity as a conceptual category, her numerous writings on the intelligentsia prefigure her subsequent linguistic turn by stressing the role of myths in intellectuals’ self-image. Above all, Fitzpatrick took a skeptical attitude toward the idea, held fiercely by Soviet intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s, of the intelligentsia’s special capacity for self-sacrifice on behalf of knowledge, art, the good of “the people,” and other cultural values. If, as she concluded, the intelligentsia (scholars, writers, creative artists) emerged from the revolutionary epoch with its cultural authority enhanced and its material standing assured, then the tropes of the intellectuals’ heroic resistance to and martyrdom at the hands of an oppressive regime surely had to be revised to include collaboration with, and even utilization of, the Soviet system to promote their own ends.<sup>27</sup>

Fitzpatrick’s analyses of culture in the decades following the revolution have a strong sociological thrust. Although chary of the concept of class, she readily attributed to intellectuals motives of class or corporate interests as well as individual interests. The social category that she seems to have

found most meaningful in her investigation of Soviet culture was “elite.” Intellectuals, of course, denied that they constituted an elite, a status group defined by economic and social privilege; as they saw it, when they tried to prevent ill-prepared proletarians from being admitted to university or to stave off party control of the arts, they were defending intellectual “freedom,” not class interest. Yet the Bolsheviks had a point when they accused the intelligentsia of elitism, according to Fitzpatrick: “In fact, the complex relationship between the Bolshevik Party and the Russian intelligentsia in the decade after the revolution is probably best understood as two competing elites, jealously jockeying for position, and withal constituting the only possible claimants for leadership in a fragmented and unsettled post-revolutionary society.”<sup>28</sup> Cultural authority thus became bound up with elite prerogatives, and when different factions within the intelligentsia sought to monopolize the cultural field, it was not incidental, in Fitzpatrick’s view, that they would thereby gain control over the perquisites associated with cultural authority.

Fitzpatrick’s earliest writings center on cultural politics, and what she later referred to as the “cultural front” left a lasting imprint on her interpretation of Soviet history. I see a foreshadowing of the mature scholar in Fitzpatrick’s B.A. honors thesis on Soviet music, completed before she turned twenty. Interested in the musical consequences of state intervention in the arts, Fitzpatrick drew the negative conclusion that it had merely delayed, rather than prevented, the emergence of a tiered musical world in which popular music (classical or otherwise) was divorced from the critically acclaimed, abstract, modernist music preferred by “serious composers.” The composers themselves had played a key role in pushing a modernist agenda after Stalin’s death by shifting the basis of esthetic judgment from tunefulness and accessibility to something that she described as “good intentions”—to be judged, importantly, by composers themselves.<sup>29</sup> Composers attempting to wrest cultural authority away from the Party while benefiting from the existence of a state-sponsored cultural establishment: here is the embryo of Fitzpatrick’s subsequent view of Soviet intellectuals and of the curiosity that underlay the study of social support. More generally, Fitzpatrick’s explorations of culture colored her understanding of change over time from the Lenin to the Stalin period. A version of what Vera Dunham termed the “Big Deal”—the Stalin-era endorsement of the conservative values that Dunham associated with parvenus<sup>30</sup>—first emerged in Fitzpatrick’s writings about high culture, when she identified an alliance with the conservative strand of the intelligentsia as part of the shift from a revolutionary to a modernizing regime. Though Fitzpatrick pushed the endpoint of the revolution back to 1938 in the second edition of *The Russian Revolution*, the picture of “high Stalinism” as both a conservative recasting of revolutionary motifs and the consolidation of a new social base has remained a cornerstone of her interpretation.

Fitzpatrick’s contributions to Soviet history have, in many cases, been assimilated into the common knowledge of the profession. Who today would want to deny the proposition, so controversial in its time, that Stalin’s purges

had beneficiaries as well as victims? Who has not internalized her critique of class, or her insistence that Soviet culture was at least partly negotiated rather than imposed? Yet beyond the content of her arguments, Fitzpatrick's contribution to the field has also rested on more general aspects of her historical approach. One of those aspects is her relationship to sources. Ron Suny, in his essay for this volume (chapter 1), has commented on her unique knowledge of Soviet archives ("She loves the archives, knows them better than anyone else in the West, and is probably rivaled in Russia only by Oleg Khlevniuk"). I'm not certain about that, though she indeed knows them well—but what is beyond doubt is that Sheila has, throughout her career, focused on sources, delighted in sources, searched for sources, thought critically about them.<sup>31</sup> It is characteristic that her first graduate course at University of Chicago was an introduction to Soviet sources rather than a problem- or theory-driven seminar. What particularly struck me then (I took that course), and is also evident in her scholarly oeuvre, is her creativity as a researcher: given an interpretative question, she would imagine the widest variety of possible sources that might shed light on it. Conversely, she has a prodigious ability to convert sources themselves into historical questions. Petitions, denunciations, and so forth were not simply structural elements of Soviet society and written genres, as she portrays them in *Everyday Stalinism* or *Tear Off the Masks!*, after having performed her interpretive work; they were also intriguing classes of sources, and she presumably started thinking about them because of this fact. Archival research was irresistible to someone interested in the Stalin period—characterized by Fitzpatrick as recently as 1978 as "almost uncharted territory for the historian"<sup>32</sup>—given the paucity and mendacity of the published record for those years. Even so, my sense from our many conversations about sources is that her love of the archives has as much to do with her love of novelty—of the way that sources can lead the historian down unexpected pathways—as with a commitment to any special truth value inherent in archives as against other kinds of source. The opening of formerly classified archives in the early 1990s, which brought a flood of new source materials into the public domain, meant that that was where the new impressions, and hence new avenues of inquiry, were to be obtained.

Fitzpatrick's approach to research in the era of open archives has been guided by her interest in new impressions, as well as by her continuing orientation toward history from below. Whereas a few scholars—R. W. Davies and J. Arch Getty come to mind—reacted to the opening of the archives with excitement that now, at long last, they could verify and elaborate or, alternatively, disprove the interpretations they had developed in preceding decades, Fitzpatrick sought new voices and new questions. Davies accordingly proceeded to carry out exhaustive research in specific archival *fondy* while Fitzpatrick played the odds, turning to new *fondy* as soon as a particular run of archives yielded diminishing returns. A major element of her research strategy was what she has described to me as "dipping." Dipping meant keeping an eye out for something interesting, not answering questions

in a definitive way. Her post-1991 scholarship has occasionally been criticized for its impressionistic quality (Robert E. Johnson, reviewing *Stalin's Peasants*, pithily questioned whether "the plural of anecdote is data"<sup>33</sup>), but that same quality has helped her attempt to bring ordinary individuals to life. She quotes them liberally, with words drawn from the archives. She tells their stories, weaving them together into a more richly variegated tapestry of Stalin-era society than had been possible based on the source record available before 1991.

Fitzpatrick's "impressionism," her tendency to privilege breadth, variety, and novelty of sources over exhaustive but narrowly defined research, militates against absolute conclusions, but this is also a conscious part of her historical creed. As early as 1986, she wrote of a "cyclical model" of history, "where one relative truth succeeds another in a sequence that is not predetermined." Historical interpretation was a matter of "shaking the kaleidoscope to get a different pattern," not a movement toward a final truth.<sup>34</sup> Data matters; the archives have rendered some previous interpretations untenable and bolstered others, she believes, and she has incorporated many new findings into her understanding of the Soviet past. Yet, even when she reports on the "revelations" of the archives, as in a 2007 essay on the state and future of the field, she highlights the contingency of scholarship:

Archives rarely give unambiguous answers to the questions historians ask, even when the questions are simple factual ones: for example, to the question, "Was Stalin responsible for Kirov's murder?," the archives' answer turns out to be "Probably not, but there's no definitive documentary proof either way." Moreover, data are not the only driving force, perhaps not even the main one, in the evolution of historical interpretation. Perhaps an essential, complete and true history of mankind exists, but if so, it is accessible only to God; what we normally call history are stories made by historians according to professional conventions and their interpretation of available data. Thus the story I will outline of changing historical interpretation after 1991 is only partly a story of "what we found in the archives." Equally important are historians' reactions to the current political and cultural environment and to changing methodological and interpretive fashions within their profession.<sup>35</sup>

History, like Soviet citizens' identities, is constructed; sources form the building blocks for the edifice, but the historians' blueprints as well as virtually unconscious cultural influences on priorities and tastes define the architectural style.

Fitzpatrick has, over the years, been a lively commentator on the shifting kaleidoscope of Soviet history. One of her signal contributions to the field has been her critical surveys of new and interesting work. Her choices are often idiosyncratic; important books are frequently excluded from discussion because they do not fit into a trend, and moreover these articles have a tendency to irritate the very authors whose work she reviews. Yet they have also been among her most widely cited writings, stimulating debate and helping to sharpen the arguments on all sides. Almost all of them combine a review of



literature with programmatic prescriptions, in which she sets forth an agenda derived to a significant degree from her own research interests. Fitzpatrick claims to dislike this genre and to find it exceptionally difficult to write;<sup>36</sup> be this as it may, she has authored ten or so “trend-spotting” articles since the early 1980s and may be expected to write several more. Her intellectual personality makes her ideally suited to them, for she relishes controversy and is receptive to change. The taste for novelty evident in her own research defines her reactions to other scholars’ work. She takes particular pleasure in iconoclasm,<sup>37</sup> even when the orthodoxy being challenged is partly her own. She has a special interest in the work of younger scholars, whose ideas are most likely to be new. She appreciates interpretive risk-taking and grandiose ambitions. Rarely if ever does she base her evaluation of a study on whether she thinks it “right” or “wrong”; and while she places a premium on the quantity and quality of a scholar’s research, what she values even more highly is a work’s ability to make her see a familiar past in a new light.

Questions drive research, in Fitzpatrick’s view of history, but the extent to which the answers are compelling depends on the historian’s art. For all her sociological tendencies, for all her attention to sources and source critique, Fitzpatrick has always viewed history as more of a literary than scientific endeavor. Suspense, drama, and metaphor are among the literary techniques that distinguish her scholarship, and she similarly appreciates flair in other historians’ prose. As the academic historical profession has turned sharply away from narrative in favor of analytical modes, the balance that Fitzpatrick strikes between storytelling and analysis has become that much rarer. When I think of Fitzpatrick’s analogues in other fields, the people who come to mind are virtuoso writers, such as Eugen Weber, Peter Gay, or Theodore Zeldin, with a similar eye for the telling anecdote—all from a generation slightly older than Sheila herself. Fitzpatrick did not teach writing as part of her graduate training regimen, as least as I encountered it; she respected the convention that arguments and information, the elements that can be tested in a doctoral field exam, are the focus of professional life. Yet Sheila would be the first to admit the power of a clever coinage, such as Stephen Kotkin’s “speaking Bolshevik,” or her own “Soviet Potemkinism,” or the pleasure of following an argument that takes an intriguing and unexpected turn. Presentation has always mattered to her. It would be interesting to see her devise a graduate curriculum for writing history, though she may well think that it cannot be taught.

Presentation matters in a literary sense—but for this canny player of academic politics, it is also part of the game. In professional matters, Fitzpatrick combines the role of a grand patron with that of a grandmaster.<sup>38</sup> It is not surprising that she has found Alexei Kojevnikov’s interpretation of Soviet scientific politics in terms of game-playing illuminating,<sup>39</sup> for she has always observed the competitive aspect of American academic life. It has specified rules and conventions, as well as a clear set of prizes to be won. Money, status, a wide readership, and the placement of one’s students are among the rewards that accrue to the victor; and although Fitzpatrick recognizes

the role of luck in their distribution, she acts on the premise that fortune favors the bold. Gamesmanship is built into her scholarly practice in her tendency to put forward arguments that she has not yet proven. Faulted for this tendency by Stephen Cohen in 1986, she retorted, "does he mean to imply here that hypotheses should never be put forward or tested? That historians should start with a priori conclusions about everything and spend their lives confirming them?"<sup>40</sup> In her rebuttal, she critiqued Cohen's judgment from the rhetorical high ground of "political impartiality," but one could add that it was precisely the fact that they were still hypotheses that gave her arguments such élan. Bravado and verve may not alter the game's outcome, but they certainly affect the spectators' evaluation of the players. Most importantly, for Fitzpatrick, the game is played with others, as well as against them. Insofar as she has been able to reshape the Soviet history field in her image, it has become a lively and contentious field but one in which differences of interpretation are not grounds for disrespect.

## NOTES

1. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
2. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution, 1917–1932* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
3. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).
4. Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), esp. 1–40.
5. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "New Perspectives on Stalinism," *Russian Review* 45, 4 (October, 1986): 357–73.
6. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "New Perspectives on the Russian Civil War," in *Party, State and Society in the Russian Civil War*, eds. Diane Koenker, William G. Rosenberg, and Ronald Grigor Suny (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3–23.
7. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Social Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, 1917–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
8. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite, 1928–1937," *Slavic Review* 38,3 (September, 1979): 377–402, reprinted in *The Cultural Front*, 149–82.
9. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Politics as Practice: Thoughts on a New Soviet Political History," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5,1 (2004): 27–54, here at 27.
10. See especially "New Perspectives on Stalinism," 361–4.
11. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
12. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
13. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Bolsheviks' Dilemma: Class, Politics, and Culture in the Early Soviet Years," *Slavic Review* 47, 4 (Winter, 1988): 599–613, reprinted

- in Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, 16–36; idem, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” *Journal of Modern History* 65,4 (December, 1993): 745–70.
14. See especially the marvelous essays in Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), though similar interests shaped his recent work *The Soviet Century* (New York: Verso, 2005).
  15. Outstanding works in this vein include Jochen Hellbeck, “Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931–1939,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44,3 (1996): 344–73, reprinted in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions*, 77–116; idem, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); idem and Igal Halfin, “Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin’s ‘Magnetic Mountain’ and the State of Soviet Historical Studies,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44,3 (1996): 456–63; Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class Consciousness and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press, 2000); idem, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
  16. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8–9.
  17. Anna Krylova, “The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian & Eurasian History* 1,1 (2000): 119–46.
  18. See especially the introduction to *Tear Off the Masks!* and “Politics as Practice.”
  19. An exception is a recent article that focuses on the varieties of sadness in the Stalin period, “Happiness and *Toska*: An Essay in the History of Emotions in Pre-war Soviet Russia,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50, 3 (2004), 357–71.
  20. A recent example from contemporary historiography is Orlando Figes, who attributes much of the violence of the Russian civil war to the exceptional brutality of Russian peasants; cf. *A People’s Tragedy* (New York: Viking, 1996).
  21. London Review of Books, “Diary,” 8 February 2007.
  22. Ibid.
  23. See, e.g., Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); idem, *Children’s World: Growing up in Russia, 1890–1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Stephen Lovell, *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710–2000* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
  24. See, e.g., Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); idem, “Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjunction,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2,1 (Winter, 2001): 111–64; Peter Holquist, “Information is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work: Bolshevik Surveillance in its Pan-European Context,” *Journal of Modern History* 69,3 (September, 1997): 415–50; Amir Weiner, “Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Era of Socialism,” *American Historical Review* 104,4 (November, 1999): 1114–55; idem, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Kate Brown, “Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place,” *American Historical Review* 106,1 (February, 2001): 17–48; David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell

- University Press, 2003); idem, "European Modernity and Soviet Socialism," in *Russian Modernity*, ed. David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).
25. Terry Martin, "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism," in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (New York: Routledge, 2000), 348–67, and *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). Fitzpatrick's exploration of the "estate-like" characteristics of the collectivized peasantry is another area where her thinking prefigured the neotraditionalism paradigm.
  26. Personal communication to author, November 19, 2007.
  27. This is a major theme of the introduction (pp. 1–15) to *The Cultural Front*, which brought together some of her major articles on cultural politics.
  28. Ibid., 6.
  29. Sheila Mary Fitzpatrick, "Soviet Music: The Composer, the State, and the Public," B.A. Honours Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1961.
  30. Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Fitzpatrick was also taken by Nicholas Timasheff's *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1946), which similarly highlighted a conservative cultural shift.
  31. This tendency appeared so early (intelligent comments on sources figure in writings from her undergraduate days) that it may have been in-born rather than taught. Cf. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Soviet Literary Politics," *Dissent: A Radical Quarterly*, Spring 1964, no. 13 (Melbourne, Australia): 13–16.
  32. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Editor's Introduction," *Cultural Revolution in Russia*, 7.
  33. *Slavic Review* 55,1 (Spring, 1996): 186–7.
  34. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Afterward: Revisionism Revisited," *Russian Review* 45,4 (Oct., 1986): 409–13, here at 412. Seemingly at odds with these remarks is a comment in the same essay that "I am still a positivist at heart" (411, also cited in Suny, above), but she appears to have had in mind the positivist attitude toward emotional detachment rather than the belief that history can establish scientific truths.
  35. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Soviet Union in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of European Studies* 37,1 (2007): 51–71, here at 53.
  36. Personal communication to author, November 17, 2007.
  37. I owe this insight to Jochen Hellbeck in his remarks to the "Sheila Fitzpatrick and Soviet History: A Retrospective" roundtable at the 2007 AAASS convention.
  38. I have in mind bridge, not chess.
  39. Alexei Kojevnikov, "Games of Stalinist Democracy: Ideological Discussions in Soviet Sciences, 1947–1952," in *Stalinism: New Dimensions*, 142–75, cited in Fitzpatrick, "Politics as Practice," 38–43.
  40. Fitzpatrick, "Afterward: Revisionism Revisited," 412.

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## CHAPTER 3

### THE TWO FACES OF TATIANA MATVEEVNA

*Yuri Slezkine*

*Tear off the masks! is a slogan with only limited appeal in most societies, since they operate on the assumption that civilization requires a certain amount of masking.*

—Sheila Fitzpatrick

Ten years ago I was in Moscow doing research about elite life in the 1930s. One of the people I interviewed was Tatiana Matveevna N., an ironic, imperious, and mischievous woman in her eighties. As we sat in her apartment drinking tea and eating chocolates (“I’m not supposed to, but how can I resist?”), she talked about her happy childhood in Rostov; her parents’ death from typhus during the civil war; her lean year in an orphanage in Saratov; her life with her uncle, a rising Party official; her brief marriage to a sad man who hardly noticed the Revolution; her arrival in Moscow with a small daughter and lots of ambition; her tempestuous college days during the First Five Year Plan; and her exciting first job posting in 1936. It was not easy to be the only female engineer in a large factory, but she excelled in her work, received numerous awards, became a Stakhanovite, and was elected Komsomol secretary. (At this point she smiled and shrugged resignedly.)

Whatever she did not owe to her own talent and dedication, she owed to Mark Semenovitch Goldman, a Party bureau member, top engineer, and exceptional human being. He was “a very educated person—educated as a Communist and as an engineer,” and she “worshipped him and thought: ‘Wow, what a man!’” [preklonialas’ pered nim i dumala, chto, ukh, kakoi!].” He was her patron, mentor, and hero—her “ultimate authority” on everything. And then he was arrested as a wrecker, and she was asked why she had failed to unmask him. “How could I have unmasked him,” she said, “when I trusted him so much?”

She had acted “very naively and very honestly,” in other words, but that’s the kind of person she was. And then another terrible thing happened. One day, because of “all that nervous atmosphere, and everything that was going on,” she pulled the wrong switch and left the whole factory without electricity. No one was hurt, and she corrected her mistake immediately (in the

presence of an NKVD agent she had summoned herself, according to emergency instructions), but a possible act of sabotage by a wrecker's protégée proved too much, and she was expelled from the Komsomol. Meetings were held; sinister articles appeared in the factory's wall newspaper; and the head manager told her he had no choice but to fire her as soon as he found a replacement. Every day, as she walked home from work, she would hear footsteps behind her, expect to be stopped at any moment ("this time they'll grab me for sure"), and then start running—"faster and faster and faster,"—until she would finally reach her apartment, lock the door, and breathe a huge sigh of relief ("locking the door made you feel safe"). And the whole time, she kept wondering what made a person an enemy of the people and whether she "might actually be one." "Maybe the fact that I caused that power outage did qualify me as an enemy?" But no, she had been expelled for her "failure to unmask" Goldman, and that did not seem fair. "How could I have unmasked him?" she would argue in Komsomol meetings and letters to officials: "He was a Party member, a bureau member, a respected person . . . How could I?" It was not easy to argue, however, "because I myself, you know . . . Because when they accuse you, you become, you feel that maybe, just maybe in their eyes you really are an enemy. Oh God, I don't know . . . I didn't know then what an enemy was."

As it turned out, she was not an enemy. After a series of appeals, she received an audience with the head of the Komsomol, A. V. Kosarev, and he had her reinstated and rehabilitated. She got another job, married another colorless man, and went on to have a long life full of adventure, discovery, generosity, and new mistakes, big and small.

She talked for a while longer, remembering new stories and eating more chocolates ("This is going to be the last one, I promise."), but I wasn't listening anymore. I was trying to remember where I had heard this story before.

As soon as she stopped talking, exhausted by the effort but obviously amused by life's strangeness and her own miraculous durability, I ran back to my apartment, searched through my hard drive, and eventually found what I was looking for: a letter written by Tatiana Matveevna in February, 1937, sixty years earlier, in that same apartment. Sheila had found it in an archive and sent it to me for possible inclusion in a collection of women's life stories we were editing (*In the Shadow of Revolution*). The letter was addressed to a Central Committee member and belonged to what Sheila calls the "cry for help" variety of supplicants' communications. Most of the story was there: the childhood, the parents, the orphanage, the uncle, and the college.

In 1936 I graduated from the institute and began my independent life as an engineer. I took a very active part in volunteer and professional work and was considered one of the best employees at the factory. For my work I was awarded the honorary title of Stakhanovite shock worker, and I did a great deal in order to live up to that title.

...The only female engineer at the factory, I competed successfully with all the other engineers. My coworkers were proud of me, elected me to the

presidiums of various meetings, and showered me with attention. Because of my position, I was in close contact with the top managers and leading engineers of the factory.

The action picked up at the same point and in the same way as in the oral narrative:

Among these people, along with honest specialists, were the subsequently unmasked Trotskyite wreckers Goldman [and others], arrested by the agents of the NKVD. In August 1936 I was expelled from the Komsomol for ties to these political scoundrels. I was attacked at a variety of meetings and covered with all sorts of dirt, including accusations of moral laxity [*raspushchennost'*]. People started avoiding me, and this is the way it has been ever since. My uncle and the Komsomol raised me to be straightforward and honest, and so at the Komsomol meeting and everywhere else I said truthfully that, along with Party members whose political honesty was beyond reproach, these subsequently unmasked hidden enemies had, indeed, gathered in my apartment on several occasions. Asked if I liked Goldman, I said simply that I used to like him, as did many others, because in the past he had enjoyed great authority and everyone's confidence. Based on this, they concluded that I was a political enemy and that I had lost my vigilance.

But that is not true because I, like everyone around me, was unaware of Goldman's anti-Soviet activities and was not personally involved with these people. There is no compromising evidence against me in this regard, nor can there possibly be any, which means that my removal from political life and the mistrust by which I am surrounded is totally unfair. Nobody is paying any attention to these facts, and nobody dares reconsider the decision of the Komsomol committee to expel me.

This situation causes me great suffering, for I cannot obtain justice and am deprived of the most elementary political rights and confidence, without which life loses all meaning.

The similarity of the two stories, separated by genre, style, tone, purpose, most of Soviet history, and almost a whole human lifetime, was remarkable. The professional mistake, clearly important in Tatiana Matveevna's perception of her predicament at the time of the interview and, it seems fair to assume, at the time of the event, was wisely omitted in the formal plea (the official reason for the expulsion was the failure to unmask Goldman), while the insinuation of moral laxity and "personal involvement," clear enough in the letter, was probably best left out in a conversation with a stranger half her age (although the emphasis on how much she had worshipped the man did suggest a degree of emotional attachment that made the story more dramatic and her dilemma, more difficult).

The theme of naïve frankness was prominent in both accounts. Indeed, the letter, which assumed the addressee's ability to consult the minutes of the meetings, seems to confirm the accuracy of the claims of reckless truth-telling that appeared suspect in the strategically self-deprecating personal



recollection. The resolution (in both senses) was also the same, providing for a satisfying finale and the explanation for this happy outcome. The notation in the margin of the letter said: "For Comrade Kosarev. Please look into this."

The most obvious difference between the two accounts concerns the question of guilt and innocence. In the 1997 interview, the innocence of both Goldman and the narrator is taken for granted; the questions—left unanswered and apparently presumed to be unanswerable—have to do with the concept of an "enemy of the people" and the reasons for Tatiana Matveevna's willingness to consider herself guilty. In the 1937 letter, Goldman's guilt is assumed, though possibly not without some mental reservation; at issue are Tatiana Matveevna's claims of innocence (also, as we know, less than fully sincere). These claims are of two kinds: one, familiar from the interview, is public, incapable of proof, and based on common sense and a presumption of innocence (I did not know, how could I have known, everyone else is in the same position, etc.); the other, which comes in the letter's dramatic culmination, is its masked mirror image:

In order to refute the accusation of a loss of vigilance, I can reveal to you, in your capacity as secretary of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), a circumstance that cannot be made public. In April 1936 I found myself in possession of certain facts worthy of attention and, on my own initiative, approached the NKVD. Since then I have been an unofficial employee of the Moscow Regional Department of the NKVD and continue to report on my factory to this day. I have received various assignments, which I have carried out to the best of my ability. Some of them had to do with Goldman... and a number of others, currently under arrest. In my reports I could not demonstrate conclusively that they were Trotskyites and wreckers, but I am convinced that the information I supplied prompted the NKVD to conduct a more thorough investigation of these people.

It will not be difficult for you to verify these facts, which testify to my vigilance and my devotion to the cause of the party and government.

Was she really "an unofficial employee of the NKVD"? Probably so: it would have been easy for a Central Committee member to verify these facts. Is it true that she approached the NKVD on her own initiative? Probably so, for the same reason. Did she become a permanent informer voluntarily? It is impossible to tell. Was she responsible for Goldman's arrest? Probably not, judging by the indirect apology she offers for not being conclusive. Did she really like Goldman? I think she did.

Several days later, I wrote to Sheila and we agreed not to unmask Tatiana Matveevna and not to include her letter in our collection. Why not? Mostly because I knew and liked her, knew her friends and neighbors, had met her daughter, and drunk her tea (the chocolates were mine), and because life's strangeness and complexity are more apparent when you meet your protagonists and drink their tea. Does that mean that a personal acquaintance with the historian will save one from being unmasked? Not necessarily, but

it does improve one's chances. There are other possible considerations. In her *Tear Off the Masks!*, Sheila names all the letter writers except for those in "Wives' Tales" (who go by their initials, real or fictitious). Is it because it is the only piece set in the 1940s, making it more likely that some of the characters may still be alive, or because it deals with adultery and alcoholism, matters that entitle the characters to a degree of privacy and confidentiality?

I often remember how Lydia Petrovna from the Moscow Party Archive would look through the files covered by the statute of limitations in order to make sure there was nothing there that might cause embarrassment to particular individuals or their descendants: cases involving Trotskyism and wrecking were okay; those involving adultery and alcoholism were not. Would she have given me Tatiana Matveevna's letter? Should she have? I am not sure, but I remember becoming more sympathetic to her approach after Jochen Hellbeck told me he had found my grandfather's diary.

When I sat down to write this piece, I decided to give my "subject" a pseudonym and change a few facts to protect her identity. Civilization, I reasoned, required a certain amount of masking. But now I wonder. "Tatiana Matveevna" is dead, and I have learned a lot more about the strangeness and complexity of her world since I first realized that the letter I was planning to publish had been written by the ironic, imperious, mischievous woman I had just met. Perhaps someday I will be able to do her two lives the justice they deserve. History, after all, requires a certain amount of unmasking.

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## CHAPTER 4

# MILITARY OCCUPATION AND SOCIAL UNREST: DAILY LIFE IN RUSSIAN POLAND AT THE START OF WORLD WAR I

*Joshua Sanborn*

One of Sheila Fitzpatrick's most durable interests over the course of her career was the effect of massive social upheaval on the daily existence of Soviet citizens. From her studies of student life in the 1920s to her investigation of collectivization in the 1930s, she seemed especially drawn to the ways that unusual events affected normal people.<sup>1</sup> Even an article subtitled "the 'return to normalcy'" concluded that normalcy did not return in the postwar period until after Stalin's death in 1953 (and the end of the essay in question).<sup>2</sup>

In many ways, Fitzpatrick's focus on the daily rhythms of life in the most turbulent periods of Soviet history formed the core of her iconoclastic position within the profession. She expressed a practiced bewilderment with scholars who somehow failed to comprehend that even in the most unsettled of times, Soviet citizens ate, argued, had sex, and created social ties with one another. It was self-evident for her that there was a society in the Soviet Union and that it could be studied. She was, at the same time, suspicious of scholars who argued that the early Soviet existence was somehow "normal" either in the perceptions of those who lived through it or in any reasonable comparative perspective. The Soviet Union was a different place, and any attempt at an *Alltagsgeschichte* had to account for that difference. As she wrote in the introduction to *Everyday Stalinism*, her topic was the study of "extraordinary everydayness."<sup>3</sup>

Fitzpatrick concerned herself most of all with the ways in which the revolution had turned the ordinary into the extraordinary, first of all in 1917, and then during the First Five Year Plan. Her intellectual and moral interest in the fate of the revolution did not, however, blind her to other major drivers of historical change. War in particular played an important role in Soviet history, as she argued explicitly in seminal texts like "The Civil War as a Formative Experience."<sup>4</sup> She also did a great deal to encourage and support

the work of graduate students studying the broader impact of military experiences. This was true not only for those who explicitly studied military institutions, but also for the entire cadre of her students who took the experience of World War II so very seriously in their explorations of the postwar period. For Fitzpatrick and her students, war was a fundamental feature of the Soviet experience, and it was also important in its own right.

It is within this tradition of treating both war and daily life seriously that I offer the following observations regarding daily life in Russian Poland in 1914. I do not wish to draw a straight causal line between the wartime occupation of Poland and the Russian Revolution here. After all, the major historical actors involved in the war had little influence on Bolshevik politicians, and the region in question was to become part of an independent, non-Soviet state in 1919. Any chain of causation would therefore have to be long and winding. Nevertheless, I would argue that the revolutionary upheavals in daily life that were to shake the entire country by 1930 did have important antecedents in the war zones that formed in 1914. Students of 1917 have long known that the Russian economy was severely affected by the war, as hyperinflation, goods shortages, and industrial unrest made material life increasingly precarious.<sup>5</sup> By the time of the February Revolution, most of the Russian Empire's citizenry felt that their lives had changed, almost always for the worse. Indeed, the anger of those who felt the pain of the war toward those who seemed basically unaffected by the tragedy formed the core of much of the social conflict during 1917.

Though this sense of loss and upheaval deepened over the course of the war, it was not primarily the result of "war weariness." Instead, the war's impact on daily life, economic practice, and political culture happened almost instantaneously. Just as recent research has suggested that ideological shifts are prone to crystallize rapidly rather than develop evenly over generations,<sup>6</sup> so too did the material and psychological disruptions of the war period affect individuals over the course of days, not years. The length of the war brought not so much weariness as the possibility for these ruptures to spread geographically. The social, economic, and political upheavals began in border regions and then spread to the interior. Some of these transformations spread quickly, like the paranoia regarding espionage. Others came later, like detailed market regulations. But most spread eastward during the Great Retreat of 1915, developed widely across the empire over the next two years, and matured into a full-blown revolution and civil war between 1917 and 1921. Tracing the full development of social upheaval across the continent during these turbulent years is beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, I seek to explore only the first stage of this process: the rapid transformation of life in frontline zones that occurred in the first weeks of the war. I will focus on Russian Poland, but much the same could be said about life in occupied zones like Galicia and (eventually) Eastern Anatolia as well.

The geographic parameters of these frontline zones were defined by the vicissitudes of events on the battlefield. At the outset of the war, as the German army focused its offensive efforts on Belgium and France, the

Russian army launched simultaneous offensives in Galicia and East Prussia. The Russians moved slowly forward in Galicia, but turned victory into defeat in East Prussia, where poor coordination of forces allowed the smaller German forces to drive the Russian First Army back across the frontier and to encircle and capture much of the Second Army. The Russians proved able to refortify on their own side of the border, however, so Germans had to wait until the summer of 1915 for a final victory in Russian Poland. The armies, in other words, were quite mobile. Even outside of the major offensives, each army sent patrols behind enemy lines and even occupied frontier towns with very modest troop concentrations for weeks at a time. Towns in Russian Poland like Kalisz and Częstochowa on the border, and ones like Pruszków much further in, were occupied by hostile forces, and cavalry patrols and marine expeditions down the Vistula River regularly appeared without warning. The defining feature of life in border zones on the Eastern Front, therefore, was persistent physical insecurity.

One of the most interesting features of this early war period was that this insecurity in many ways invigorated civic life in the region. This was a most unexpected outcome. The entire region had been placed under martial law at the very start of the war, in part to prevent civic activism of any sort. Military officials hoped and expected that the civilian population would remain docile and fully obedient while troops occupied their cities, towns, and villages. The armed forces were utterly unprepared to actually govern in the zones of their authority, however. In occupied enemy territory, they had no real plans, and indeed appear simply to have requested civilian police officials to serve in these new areas.<sup>7</sup> In regions on the Russian side of the border, the army was also, in practice, an occupying force, but army officials, to the extent that they thought about it at all, appear to have thought that life would continue as normal. They imagined that local officials would continue to serve, currency would be protected and respected, and goods would be available for sale or for orderly requisition.<sup>8</sup>

It turned out, however, that local officials (mostly from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance) were not very enthusiastic about being lackeys of the military in combat zones. Virtually the first thing that local authorities did in the war was to abandon their virtually indefensible customs posts, to pack up currency stores and other valuables in provincial centers, and to evacuate top Russian officials back to Warsaw in order to avoid embarrassing prisoner situations.<sup>9</sup> In some particularly threatened areas, gendarmes even fled or changed into civilian clothes to avoid German capture.<sup>10</sup> Those who stayed were often left without any supervision or oversight, with predictable results. At the Otwock railway station, an abandoned gendarme grabbed himself a healthy supply of vodka, drank himself into a stupor, and imposed a one ruble "tax" on every passenger heading toward the ticket booth.<sup>11</sup> In practical terms, this departure of officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance left a gap of authority. When armed troops arrived, they ruled with varying degrees of arbitrariness. In the first months of the war in particular, they clearly had no plan,

much less training, for civilian administration. As a result, they did very little of it.

Much of the day-to-day governance in these regions, ranging from fire prevention to trade to policing, thus fell in the hands of local notables. Take, for instance, the city of Włocławek, which was occupied by a German detachment for three weeks immediately following the outbreak of the war. The Germans arrested the captain of the police, disarmed the rest, and told them to leave the district or be detained. Other local citizens who showed insufficient enthusiasm for the occupiers were also imprisoned. Order in the town was maintained by volunteers from the fire brigade carrying sabres. After the German departure, only these lightly armed men served as police, a situation that obtained in other cities like Lubień and Kowal as well. For all of these border cities, the only Russian army presence was a detachment of Cossacks who had 80 versts to patrol, looking mainly for German scouts rather than civilian criminals.<sup>12</sup> Even in towns like Kutno, where local officials neither fled nor were driven away, new institutions of local self-government sprang up immediately. Within the first two weeks of the war, Kutno residents established a committee to assist families of mobilized reservists and a citizen's committee to assist the "most needy residents of Kutno."<sup>13</sup>

Unsurprisingly, these local committees ran into some difficulty. As one group of these nascent leaders dryly observed, they were not prepared for this sudden authority and responsibility, since they had been deprived of the opportunity to develop institutions of local self-government in the pre-war period.<sup>14</sup> One can hardly blame Polish organizers for reminding the imperial government of the costs of its repressive pre-war policies in Poland. The Ministry of Internal Affairs delayed the introduction of zemstvos to the "Western Provinces" as long as it could for fear of abetting the development of Polish nationalism and then made matters even worse by insisting that the new Polish zemstvos be dominated by ethnic Russians.<sup>15</sup> Still, what was done was done. The facts on the ground were that imperial officials had evacuated, military officials were indifferent to civilian administration, and local officials were complete novices.

As if that were not bad enough, the new local administrators now had a whole set of problems that even experienced men would have struggled with, such as finding housing for makeshift military hospitals, feeding and sheltering residents whose houses had been destroyed, and attempting to regulate trade in very volatile circumstances. Providing security was even more difficult, since the most dangerous troublemakers were literally outside of the law—those members of the rival armies whom the firemen and shop owners could not even hope to contain. Still, the services of these locals were important. As the Płock governor attested, they helped resolve disputes between landlords and tenants, between estate owners and laborers, and between businesspeople. They established systems of temporary credit, protected state property, and enforced basic food safety regulations in urban markets.<sup>16</sup> As these tasks grew more complicated during the first turbulent months of the war, members of several of these urban committees joined

together to plead for the creation of a whole system of local "resident committees" supported from above by a "central resident committee."<sup>17</sup> The proposal was met with hesitance in Warsaw and St. Petersburg. The emergence of the political vacuum and the troubled experience of nearly a decade of Duma politics in the empire had made the tsar's servitors wary of local political participation, much less proposals to crown the edifice of resident committees with a central body of politically active Poles. Nevertheless, a week later Roman Dmowski's National Democrats formed just such a central committee.<sup>18</sup>

Instead of fully engaging with these local initiatives, army officials ordered civilian administrators to return to endangered areas and strengthened martial law in the region.<sup>19</sup> One of the key features of the emerging martial regime was a set of economic regulations that was intended to better support the troops but ended up systematically disarticulating imperial trading patterns. Prior to the war, the Polish frontier was alive with international trade. Migrant workers crossed the border frequently, both legally and illegally. In the final years of peace, 400,000 seasonal laborers alone made the trip from the Russian Empire to the German Empire annually.<sup>20</sup> Goods flowed through the zone at a rate high enough to ensure healthy profits not only for merchants but also for the officials who supplemented their incomes by easing bureaucratic regulations at the border.<sup>21</sup>

This entire network of economic activity was predictably and logically shut down by the outbreak of hostilities. But domestic trade took a beating as well, again largely due to state controls. Army edicts dating from the very first month of the war prevented trade with the rest of the empire for many key goods. Grain, flour, livestock, and leather had to be sold within provincial borders.<sup>22</sup> The same went for fuel, and the trade in liquor was, as in the rest of the empire, forbidden for the duration of the war. The rationale for these edicts was clear: the army desperately needed a constant source of goods of all sorts from the regions where its troops were stationed, and it could not or would not tolerate a system in which it had to compete for those goods either with private economic actors or with state organs in the rear. The only way to establish the military as a monopoly consumer in the war zone was to use the mechanisms of martial law to compel producers and traders to give them the right of first refusal.

The attempt to impose a system of economic autarky for each separate province was bad enough. But army commanders also disrupted normal economic operations within provincial towns. Most notably, the pathological suspicion of merchants in general and Jews in particular led to ill-advised assaults on simple practices like warehousing bulk goods. Building stocks of supplies to hedge against severe shortages at some later date was criminalized. News that merchants were doing exactly this in December 1914 led army officials to believe that the Jews had banded together to form a large conspiratorial plot to raise prices through speculation.<sup>23</sup> Sixty-four men were arrested in Warsaw, most of them Jewish. Their protestations during interrogation were quite convincing. One detained man held that he had brought



salt all the way from Odessa but couldn't sell it because of the Christmas holiday and warehoused it instead. A merchant from Pruszków explained that he had a large storehouse of sugar because he had evacuated all of it on the eve of the Germans taking the city. Even the local gendarmes came to the realization that there was no "criminal intent" in the activities of the merchants. The logical conclusion was that merchants were helping the war effort by bringing goods into the war zone, not only from other provinces, but also from the grasp of the enemy.

The high command did not accept this logic, however, and overrode the objection of the police. The merchants were arrested, and their goods were confiscated. With peacetime networks disrupted, warehousing difficult, trading dangerous, and armed men roaming the land, price instability soon ensued. The authorities responded by attempting to fix prices on key goods. Again, this move started very early and was driven by army officials who had only the slightest notions of how economic and social systems operated.<sup>24</sup> As Mikhail Lemke noted in the diary he kept at General Headquarters during the war, the General Staff Academy had done nothing to prepare its officers for the demands of civilian governance they were sure to face in zones of martial law. Graduates had no coursework on "state law and the economy, nothing on fundamental legal codes and administrative organs... nothing on finance, they don't have a clue on anything of the kind." As a result, he concluded, "they go on blindly, simply not even suspecting anything about the life of the country."<sup>25</sup>

It was this sort of unpromising crowd that was the audience for key financial actors in Warsaw, who desperately pleaded with top officials to adopt immediate measures to stabilize the war zone economy less than two weeks after the bullets started flying. Specifically, local business leaders suggested supporting reliable emergency institutions for the extension of credit and urged the protection of property rights (from military depredations above all). They warned that in existing conditions the only reasonable economic decision left for many in the area was "liquidation."<sup>26</sup> The Polish businessmen were ignored. Instead, the regulations issued by the high army command were punitive in nature (don't export, don't price gouge, don't stockpile). There was little concern for supporting local economies in the midst of catastrophic change. Indeed, what we see is that already in August 1914, the army was helping to create the "overarching antimarket consensus"<sup>27</sup> that Peter Holquist has identified as being a crucial development within Russian political culture during the war years as a whole.

As usual, the bureaucratic inclination to think that lots of regulations would correspond to lots of orderliness was mistaken. To the contrary, the true economic story was one of near anarchy. Hamhanded, overbearing officiousness by a deeply understaffed and inexperienced administration led not to a rational utilization of local resources but the instantaneous emergence of new forms of economic practice that did even more to bewilder the administration. The second economy of the black market hummed with activity. Traders moved between army camps and towns selling not just food, liquor,

and cigarettes, but also army uniforms, rifles, revolvers, overcoats, and boots. Some of this was clearly the result of scavenging battlefields, as men arrested with contraband near engagement sites had up to ten times as much material as those away from the fighting.<sup>28</sup> But soldiers also regularly sold their gear to local merchants. In Płock, several enlisted men were arrested for selling away winter clothes, for instance, and leakage of state property remained an issue throughout the war.<sup>29</sup>

What we might call a “third economy” also emerged in the form of looting, which was quite widespread. Individually, in small groups, as parts of full units, on both sides of the prewar border, and by both armies, soldiers simply took advantage of their strength to take what they wanted. In one very typical case, the residents of an estate near the Vistula River returned to the premises they had fled during an artillery barrage in late September to find Russian soldiers milling about, eating vegetables, and pointlessly destroying furniture. When one of the bailiffs complained, a soldier struck him, threatened him with a bayonet, and told him to shut up. The estate was stripped bare, as were neighboring ones in the region.<sup>30</sup> Looting occurred both near the front lines (as in this case) and well to the rear. Indeed, in October 1914, the new commander of the Second Army (General Sheideman) noted that most of the reports that soldiers were “offending” and “robbing” the locals were coming from regions far to the east of the Vistula River.<sup>31</sup>

Robbery was a constant threat in border zones, and though most perpetrators were in uniform, civilian gangs soon appeared as well. In early 1915, for instance, four bandits from Warsaw, acting on a tip that a wealthy family had been left without male protection, invaded the home of Marianna Sopienskaia. They stole 53 rubles in cash and 60 rubles in goods, raped Sopienskaia’s two teenaged daughters, and shot a neighbor whose dogs raised an alarm during the attack.<sup>32</sup>

As the Sopienskaia attack demonstrated, Christian families were not immune from attack. Nevertheless, Jews were the favorite targets of violence throughout the region. On August 18, 1914, for instance, the 235th Belobeevskii Infantry Regiment had a two-hour layover at the Tłusz railway station. Many enlisted men hopped off the train to visit local Jewish merchants. Upon finishing their “shopping,” however, many refused to pay for the goods they had collected. In response, the shopkeepers closed their doors and began conducting trade only through the windows of their shops. The soldiers reacted by breaking down the doors and “violently taking various goods.” The officers of their regiment stood by passively during the robberies, which would have gone unnoticed in the documentary record (as so many others obviously did) if a general from the 2nd Army Staff hadn’t happened by and been outraged by the “disorder.”<sup>33</sup> These more isolated attacks always had the potential to spread and develop into full-scale pogroms, as events in Lublin on the very next day (August 19) would demonstrate, when 20 Jewish stores were robbed and destroyed, with total losses of more than 20,000 rubles.<sup>34</sup>

Hunger did not prompt the looting. Most units were in fact quite well, if monotonously and blandly, fed in the first few months of the war. If there was an economic reason behind the violence, it was instead that supply agencies could not deliver visible and desirable goods promptly. Supply troops were supposed to purchase chickens and apples, for instance, to feed to the soldiers, but they moved slowly, didn't carry enough money, and generally stumbled on the job, so soldiers quickly resorted simply to taking what they saw. But the thefts cannot be explained simply in economic terms, for much of the problem was plainly one of thuggish criminality, the abuse of the weak by the strong, a fact that is attested to by the overwhelming number of Jews victimized by army troops in these regions. Soldiers knew that their word would be honored over that of a Jew, and even the murder of robbed Jews went largely unpunished.<sup>35</sup>

Above all, the widespread marauding was proof of a systematic failure of leadership on the part of the army command, which understood the problems that looting caused, not only economically, but above all politically. Top military officials knew that the war effort depended at the very least on the cooperation of the local Polish population and might well come down to the ability of one side or the other to enlist the active support of key Polish constituencies. Army commanders were therefore quite disturbed by the frequent complaints coming from civilian populations, and they issued numerous edicts demanding that soldiers be restrained. But they were unable to stop the depredations, no doubt because the only strategy they deployed was to order their subordinates to punish their soldiers severely for violating orders. As early as August 6, General von Rennenkampf (Commander of the First Army) was instructing officers to stop their troops from "marauding" by threatening them with summary execution.<sup>36</sup> On August 10, he put teeth into the order by announcing that four men had been shot for robbing local civilians.<sup>37</sup> As usual, however, swinging big sticks from far away was no substitute for strong leadership by junior officers on the ground, and that leadership was clearly missing in many units of the Russian army.

The martial law regime, therefore, did more to intensify the economic disruption that the war brought than to mitigate it. Much the same can be said of the impact of military rule on the political life of the region. Whatever positive (and unintended) outcomes there may have been as the result of the development of local civic activism were far outweighed by the poisonous brand of ethnopolitics practiced by the Russian military. Many Russian officers were already inclined to look at the world through ethnic lenses in 1914, but the usual political nightmares of military occupation (unreliable collaborators, hidden insurgents, and widespread espionage in particular) prompted the high command to deploy an ethnic grid of reliability in the regions they occupied. Germans and Jews were automatically suspected of treason or espionage, while Russophone populations were seen as natural allies.<sup>38</sup> As Eric Lohr has most exhaustively demonstrated, these ethnopolitical initiatives were both mistaken in their assumptions and profoundly destabilizing in their outcomes.<sup>39</sup> The biggest problem with these policies in

the "Vistula lands," however, was that they did nothing to address the most significant political riddle of the war: what did Poles think?

Optimists in the Russian administration saw Poles as natural Russian allies. Some appealed to high-minded Slavophile ideas, but most hoped that anti-German and anti-Jewish sentiment would provide sufficient support for the Russian cause. Officials were quick to report the evidence for this, however shaky. In October 1914, for instance, one local official informed the local gendarme administration that "according to reports from Pruszków, a certain Jew named Berson was sending telegraphs reporting troop movements to the enemy. In addition, in private conversations with local residents, Berson said that if the Germans entered Warsaw they would build a bridge with the skulls of peasants."<sup>40</sup>

This notion that Jews were reveling in the prospect of the German army inflicting bloody punishment on their Slavic tormentors was widespread. One group of Jews who gathered secretly in a Warsaw apartment in October 1914 so frightened the Poles in the building that the police were immediately called. The Poles were convinced that the Jews were planning to "dis-member" them. It turned out that they had gathered to share information on the best route to escape to the German side of the line without running into Russian troops.<sup>41</sup> These fears of Jewish retribution were also linked to the rapid expansion of spymania in the region. Soldiers and Polish civilians alike saw espionage in nearly every strange occurrence, in nearly every odd congregation of Jews or strangers, in nearly every misfortune of the war. This again is a wartime phenomenon that has been well chronicled in various recent works,<sup>42</sup> and it is striking how quickly it developed in the war zone. As with economic disaster, political suspiciousness occurred well before anyone had time to become weary with the war.

The fear of spies was not totally baseless. The Germans and the Austrians did set up intelligence operations in Russian Poland, just as the Russians tried to send agents to the other side of the line. It is difficult to determine how successful and widespread those enemy spy networks were.<sup>43</sup> German intelligence in the area was certainly far better than Russian intelligence, and this contributed decisively to their military victories, though much of this advantage was probably due to superiority in technical espionage. It does, however, seem clear from the archival files that Russian counterintelligence was not very talented and tended simply to round up people with German and Jewish names while scores of Polish agents operated among them. As Mikhail Lemke put it, counterintelligence operations were run by people who displayed an "indifference to the fate of the country and the army, laziness and an inability to get down to hard work."<sup>44</sup> Ethnic profiling was the result both of the conceptual apparatus of Russian officialdom and of incompetence. It was easier to arrest Jews than it was to infiltrate spy networks. As a result, Jews were deported and Russia's enemies got good information.

Not surprisingly, in conditions of wild instability in the security situation, these real and imagined political sympathies took on greater dimensions

when the military lines were moving. When German troops retreated from the border districts in Piotrków province soon after occupying them, in the middle of August 1914, for instance, every changed military disposition struck fear in at least part of the population. The Piotrków governor urged the front commander to send him troops, field courts, and other punitive mechanisms to round up Germans and Jews denounced for espionage and treason. Among the accusations leveled at these populations was the charge that when Russian troops retreated, the Germans and Jews felt a “malicious joy” and “terrorized the Poles, promising them the fate of Kalisz for their loyalty to the Russians.”<sup>45</sup>

The fact that these threats of retribution mentioned Kalisz is significant for understanding both civilian insecurity and the correspondingly quick rise in the politics of fear during the war period. German troops had occupied the border city of Kalisz on July 20/August 2, a day after the German declaration of war on Russia. On the following day, the German commander (Major Preusker) put the city under martial law.<sup>46</sup> That evening, things began to fall apart. In a pattern repeated many times in Belgium and France in the next few weeks, a group of nervous, trigger-happy German soldiers led by officers fixated on the danger of civilian snipers (*franc-tireurs*) got into a firefight in the dark and lashed out at an entire city.<sup>47</sup> It is still unclear what set off the gunfire. The first official German report blamed civilians, a second allowed for the possibility that Russian provocateurs had ambushed the troops, and Polish residents thought it was a case of friendly fire.<sup>48</sup> In private correspondence, Russian officials were convinced that the incident began when a group of Russian army reservists returning from Łask marched singing into the darkened town, not knowing it had been taken by the enemy.<sup>49</sup> The phenomenon of both hostile and friendly troops stumbling into one another at night and firing at each other was quite common, especially in these early probing days of the war. What made this incident special was the fact that it happened in an urban center and that German troops quickly became convinced that locals had taken up arms against them.

The German response was excessive, a point that even the German commandant of Kalisz in November 1916 came to admit.<sup>50</sup> German troops shot suspected ringleaders, took the town government and religious leaders (and at one point 750 other men) hostage and promised to execute them if further assaults occurred, levied a 50,000 ruble fine, and then withdrew from the town in order to punish it with an artillery barrage. The Germans admitted to killing 11 people, other sources estimate the figure was over 100, and one local priest reported that he buried 500 people by the time the smoke had cleared. German soldiers also engaged in widespread raping, pillaging, and arson.

There are two points to be made about the Kalisz atrocities. The first is that this sort of attack, though not unique, was unusual. The German army did assault civilians in several locations in Poland, but there was no concerted terror campaign. The second is that the fact that these atrocities were not widespread did not matter a great deal. News of Kalisz spread quickly by

word of mouth, as tens of thousands of residents fled the city and sought refuge in communities across Russian Poland. Even normally despised Russian bureaucrats were hidden by local Poles in German-occupied areas and were helped back across the lines by them. Tales of woe were spread by all of these refugees.<sup>51</sup> It did not take long for the Russian and Polish press to use Kalisz as an example of innate German barbarism and to argue that the war was being fought for the sake of civilization.<sup>52</sup>

One particularly graphic and personal account of life in Kalisz was told by a "Mrs. Gust," who had survived the assault and was attending a school for Sisters of Mercy in Riga. It was printed in the *Petrograd Courier* on August 28 as a first-hand view of "all the horrors of Teutonic bestiality." When the German assaults began, Gust, her husband, and her son fled the city. On the first day, her husband had gone off to look for a cart and had never returned. She feared the worst as she waited several days for him to come back. She finally decided to take her son to Łódź, but no sooner got there than she decided that she had to return to look for her spouse. She went through several German checkpoints, where she had all her silver money taken from her, but made it back to a devastated city where dead bodies lay uncollected and rotting on the streets. When she got to her apartment building, the neighbor's sobbing maid approached her. The maid reported that her boss had fled and left her alone in the house with her daughters, 15-year-old Anela and 12-year-old Zosia. Before long seven drunken German soldiers arrived, held down the mother, and then raped her two girls, leaving them "bloody and disfigured" on the floor. Zosia had fallen into a "nervous fever" and was near death when Mrs. Gust left them.<sup>53</sup>

This was a story that highlighted two of the major propaganda themes of the war: the need to fight Teutonic barbarism and the dangers that would befall defenseless women and children if Russian and Polish men failed in their military missions. It was also the type of story that Russian propagandists believed would convince scared Polish civilians to support the Russian war effort. The Gust tale was in fact one of many articles in the Russian (and foreign) press that pursued the two themes of barbarism and sexual assault, and this propaganda campaign appears to have achieved its goal.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, most Polish historians now agree that the Kalisz episode strengthened the position of pro-Russian politicians, at least in the short term.<sup>55</sup> German commentators reached similar conclusions both directly after the war and long after it. In the words of one author in 1920, the events in Kalisz were the "darkest page in the history of the entire campaign."<sup>56</sup> Another commented that the human and public relations disaster occasioned by the massacre were the equivalent of a "lost battle."<sup>57</sup> The politics of fear, in other words, worked quite well.

This hope that shared anti-Semitism and a shared terror of the German army would create a durable alliance between Poles and Russians was not fully borne out. There were plenty of Poles on both sides of the prewar border who urged resistance toward foreign occupiers. One flyer posted in Warsaw in August from the "National Workers Union, National Peasant Union, the

Editorial Board of 'Pol'sha,' and the Union of Independence" urged Poles to stay out of the war and allow their "enemies to weaken themselves." They noted that it didn't make sense from a Polish nationalist standpoint for "Poles to fight with Poles under the banners of our enemies."<sup>58</sup> Authorities also ran down accusations that young men were agitating among students to develop armed cells, but these investigations usually came to naught.<sup>59</sup> Those who were actually arrested for espionage or treason tended to be social marginals, ethnic enemies, and women identified as prostitutes.<sup>60</sup>

These hidden spies and revolutionaries apparently did not succeed in convincing the population to abandon the reasonable "wait and see" policy adopted by most Polish citizens in the early phase of the war. At the start of 1915, the Warsaw Province Gendarme Administration sent out questionnaires to local gendarmes asking very pointed questions about local political attitudes, including whether any attempts were made on November 29 to commemorate the 1830 uprising, how Poles treated Russian troops, and so forth, and the response from virtually every district was similar. There were no attempts to agitate in 1914 for immediate independence, and Poles related to the Russian army quite well. Still, local populations were very interested in the development of Polish legions, they followed military and political events with great enthusiasm, and above all they had taken the August 1 declaration of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich that promised autonomy for Poland after the war quite seriously. As 1914 came to a close, it seemed that there would be no nationalist Polish uprising to contend with, but that big political outcomes were envisioned for the end of the conflict.<sup>61</sup>

In conclusion, then, an examination of life in Russian Poland in the latter half of 1914 demonstrates that the outbreak of hostilities transformed the economic practices and political culture of frontier residents in ways that would become very familiar to people throughout the empire over the course of the next two decades. The destruction of trade networks and the expansion of the role of violence in the economic system through looting and requisition resulted in an unstable official economy suffocated by regulations and a vibrant but lawless unofficial economy. The weakening of imperial political administration likewise created space for new forms of political activity even as it generally meant a decline of order and security. Finally, the explosion of international conflict in a multiethnic and colonial space led both to the ethnicization of politics and deep fears and paranoia expressed in spymania, pogroms, and various other expressions of oppositional ethnopolitics.

The Polish subjects of the tsar were indeed exposed to a type of "extraordinary everydayness" during the first months of the Great War. Most of them believed that the dramatic disruptions of their economic, political, and social lives would be temporary, and a great many believed that the war would bring an end to the partition and a rebirth of Poland in one fashion or another. These measures, for them, could be seen as the last gasp of the old regimes that had governed them for the past 125 years. In this expectation, they were correct. In the summer of 1915, the tsar's armies fled Poland

for good, and the new German occupation lasted only a bit more than three years before an independent Poland emerged from the wreckage of the old monarchical empires. But these transformations were not simply the death throes of an old order, they were the birth pangs of a new one as well. As state actors and civilian populations alike took their war zone experiences eastward in the wake of the Great Retreat in 1915, they took models of behavior and governance with them that would do much to influence the revolutionary state and society that was to come.

## NOTES

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33. Chief of the Warsaw Province Gendarme Administration, Telegram to military district commanders and governor-general (August 26, 1914), GARF f. 217, op. 1, d. 1152, l. 276.
34. Captain Vavilov (Chief of the Gendarme Administration of Lublin District), Secret Telegram to the Chief of the Gendarme Administration of Lublin Province (August 20, 1914), GARF f. 238, op. 1, d. 144, l. 3.
35. Governor of Płock, Secret letter to Warsaw Governor-General (January 20, 1915), GARF f. 215, op. 1, d. 877, l. 1. For more detailed descriptions of assaults on Jews by occupying armies, see S. Ansky, *The Enemy at His Pleasure: A Journey Through the Jewish Pale of Settlement during World War I* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 5–7.

36. General von Rennenkampf, Order no. 23 to troops of the 1st Army (August 6, 1914), *Priказы по 1 Armii* VO-RGB, D 157/20.
37. General von Rennenkampf, Order no. 34 to troops of the 1st Army (August 10, 1914), *Priказы по 1 Armii* VO-RGB, D 157/20.
38. I have addressed some of these issues elsewhere: Joshua Sanborn, "Unsettling the Empire: Violent Migrations and Social Disaster in Russia during World War I," *Journal of Modern History* 77(2) (June 2005): 290–324.
39. Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire*, passim.
40. Chief of Warsaw Province Gendarme Administration, Secret letter to Chief of the Gendarme Administration of Grójec and Błonie districts (October 22, 1914), GARF f. 217, op. 1, d. 304, l. 487.
41. Chief of Warsaw Province Gendarme Administration, Secret letter to Superintendent of the 7th District of the Warsaw Police (October 21, 1914), GARF f. 217, op. 1, d. 546, l. 516.
42. The most systematic attempt to deal with the question is Fuller, esp. 172–183.
43. Russian counterintelligence did discover some spy networks, such as the one run out of Kraków by the Austrian army. Chief of Łomża Province Gendarme Administration, Completely secret circular to chiefs of district gendarme administrations in Łomża Province (January 5, 1915), GARF f. 1669, op. 1, d. 88, l. 2.
44. Lemke, 2:545.
45. Governor Iachevskii (Piotrków Province), Telegram to Zhilinskii (August 18, 1914), GARF f. 215, op. 1, d. 174, l. 470.
46. The martial law order is included in Lawrence R. Flockerzie, "Poland's Louvain: Documents on the Destruction of Kalisz, August 1914," *The Polish Review* 28(4) (1983): 78.
47. The definitive study of the assaults on civilians on the Western Front is John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2001).
48. Flockerzie, 79–87.
49. State Counselor Tolmachev, Report to the Warsaw Governor-General (July 27, 1914), GARF f. 215, op. 1, d. 174, l. 65ob-66.
50. Flockerzie, 87.
51. Tolmachev, 66.
52. See sample press clippings on German atrocities (especially in Kalisz) in GARF, f. 215, op. 1, d. 185, ll. 20–36.
53. "Poczodka v Kalish, zaniaty nemtsami," Clipping from *Petrogradskii Kur'er* no. 213, Thursday, August 28, 1914. GARF f. 215, op. 1, d. 185, l. 8.
54. For a more extensive investigation of the Kalisz events, including a description of the propaganda campaign surrounding it, see Laura Engelstein, "'A Belgium of Our Own: The Sack of Russian Kalisz, August 1914,'" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10(3) (Summer 2009): 441–73. See especially on this point pp. 450–52, 457.
55. Davies, 2: 389.
56. Georg Gothein, *Warum verloren wir den Krieg?* 2nd ed. (Stuttgart and Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt: 1920), 182. Cited in Heinz Lemke, *Allianz und Rivalität: Die Mittelmächte und Polen im ersten Weltkrieg (Bis zur Februarrevolution)* (Berlin: Akademie-verlag, 1977), 23.
57. Count Hutten-Czapski, cited in *ibid.*

58. Natsional'nyi Rabochii Soiuz, Natsional'nyi krest'ianskii Soiuz, Redaktsiia "Pol'shi," Soiuz Nezavisimosti, "Poliaki!" (Translated from Polish by Warsaw gendarmes) (August 8, 1914), GARF f. 217, op. 1, d. 304, l. 94.
59. See case of Eduard Iozefov Reshke (1915), GARF f. 217, op. 1, d. 315, l. 1–5.
60. See list included in Chief of Łomża Province Gendarme Administration, Completely secret circular to chiefs of district gendarme administrations in Łomża Province (February 4, 1915), GARF f. 1669, op. 1, d. 88, l. 91.
61. Chief of the Gendarme Administration of Pułtusk and Płońsk Districts, Secret letter to Chief of the Warsaw Province Gendarme Administration (January 12, 1915), GARF f. 217, op. 1, d. 546, l. 649.

CHAPTER 5

SEEING LIKE A SOVIET STATE:  
SETTLEMENT OF NOMADIC KAZAKHS,  
1928–1934<sup>1</sup>

*Matthew J. Payne*

*My first memory is of the moon. It was autumn, cold and we were on the tramp somewhere. Wrapped up, the cart swayed beneath me. A sudden stop, and I saw in the black sky this enormous moon. It was full, round and shone brightly. I lay on my back and couldn't tear myself from the sight for a long time. Turning over, I could clearly see on the ground some kind of thickets with stretched-out, crooked branches; there were a lot of them on both sides of the road: they were people. Stiff and silent they lay on the ground. . . . It was '31 and we were then moving from a ramshackle aul to Turgai.<sup>2</sup>*

This quote, grisly as it is, could have been a commonplace observation across the Soviet Union in the early 1930s as such sights became the terrible handmaiden of collectivization. This recollection, however, comes not from the usual victim of Stalin's famine, the peasantry, whose vagabondage always signals a severe social crisis, but nomadic Kazakhs—a nation well acquainted with pulling up stakes during hard times. These Kazakhs, however, were not nomads but desperate “displaced nomads” (*otkochevniki*), without their herds, far from their familiar migratory routes, who endured not one but innumerable trails of tears at this time. What had been emblematic of a way of life, of Kazakhness (*qazaqtyq*)—nomads on the move—now became horror, as an observer in Pavlodar related: “It is not rare to meet a Kazakh family, fleeing from who knows where and dragging behind them a sled, on top of which lies the corpse of a child, who died along the way.”<sup>3</sup>

The unfolding famine tragedy was not a result of a natural disaster, such as a crop failure or herd kill-off. Not the harsh conditions of the steppe, but rather how the Soviet regime came to envision that steppe and, more importantly, its uses, led to catastrophe for the nomads. This result was not unforeseeable; in fact, it was foreseen by both Kazakh communists and non-Party experts.<sup>4</sup> The famine stemmed from the particular way the Soviet state “saw” not only the steppe, but also how its officials came to see the nomads in it.

By implementing a massive forced settlement of them, the regime embraced a “visionary” campaign with remarkable myopia for human suffering.<sup>5</sup> It developed a habit of seeing gleaming and well-ordered—and, ironically, prosperous—settlements arising from nomadic “backwardness,” from what Soviet commentators invariably referred to as the “silent” (*glukhoi*) steppe. The regime sought not only to make Kazakh nomads “legible” to the state (the Soviet phrase was to “seize” [*okhvatyvat*] them—which turned out to be rather literal) but also to impose order on a disorderly nature and its savage (*dikie*), nomadic children.

Nomadic settlement (*osedanie*) represented the local inflection of Stalin’s “Great Turn” in Kazakhstan and became linked inextricably to the collectivization drive.<sup>6</sup> Conducted with appalling brutality and massive disruption, settling of Kazakh nomads resulted in the death of from almost a third to a half of the area’s 4.1 million Kazakh population.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the Kazakh population in Kazakhstan declined by 36 percent between the censuses of 1926 and 1939, while the number of Kazakh households fell by at least 46 percent from 1927 to 1933.<sup>8</sup> So ravaged were the Kazakhs that, despite a high birth rate, they reached their 1926 population level only in 1969.

Kazakhstan’s demographic disaster, certainly one of the last century’s great mass murders, has received its share of scholarly attention. These treatments, however, tend to fold the experience of the nomads into the broader experience of collectivization or to consider it primarily as a failed central policy. Robert Conquest, for instance, in his now classic study of the Ukrainian famine noted, “the famine in Kazakhstan was man-made, like the famine of 1921, in that it was the result of ideologically motivated policies recklessly applied. It was not, like the Ukrainian famine, deliberately inflicted for its own sake.”<sup>9</sup> However, the famine in Kazakhstan—and its concomitant epidemics—was not simply a reflection of general dearth; deaths were highly ethnicized and disproportionately affected nomads. Relatively few of Kazakhstan’s European peasant colonists died in the famine.<sup>10</sup> Even the despised and abused *kulak* deportees survived in “special settlements” around Karaganda on lands that failed to sustain nomad settlers.<sup>11</sup> Uras Isaev, a leading Kazakh communist and head of Kazakhstan’s government, well understood this ethnicization of famine, as he asked in a letter to Stalin, “We must answer the question why the mistakes of a more general character are reflected primarily in the conditions of the *aul* alone.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed.

At least part of the answer to why so many more nomads died than peasants is that nomads were not simply collectivized, but forcibly settled. Like the campaign against the veil in Uzbekistan, settlement represented a distinctive and violent variety of “cultural revolution,” of which collectivization was just a part.<sup>13</sup> Like the Uzbek campaign, it sought to break native societies of “patriarchal and feudal relics of the past,” so that they could “bypass capitalism into socialism.” What settlement did share with collectivization was its massiveness of scope and a stunning haste of implementation; from 1930 until 1936, at least 400,000 Kazakhs were settled, with only 150,000 Kazakhs still living as nomads by the later date.<sup>14</sup> They were “settled” not

into their traditional pastures, watering holes, and encampments but rather in arbitrarily chosen “settlement points” that were barely places at all. This displacement, not unlike that of deported *kulak* families, made the nomads highly vulnerable to the impositions of officialdom and their peasant neighbors, whose depredations triggered a large-scale refugee crisis.<sup>15</sup> Hundreds of thousands of *otkochevniki* streamed out of the steppe into the adjacent provinces of European Russia, Siberia, Central Asia, and much further afield—to Sinkiang, Afghanistan, Persia, and Mongolia.<sup>16</sup> Despite the state’s intention, settlement became a vast engine to transform self-reliant nomads into impoverished vagabonds.

### KAZAKHS: A “PROTECTED CLASS”

That settlement resulted in such devastation for its putative beneficiaries is, in fact, deeply paradoxical. The Soviet state may have been a colonial state but it rejected racism and ethnocentrism as a technique of rule.<sup>17</sup> In fact, through the 1920s, Soviet policy could be fairly termed “philo-Kazakh” in which external peasant settlement was banned, some Slavic settler land returned to Kazakhs, Kazakhs given priority in pasture and water reforms, extensive cultural outreach policies initiated, and, most importantly, a form of aggressive affirmative action (*korenizatsiia*, “nativization”) implemented that aimed to produce political, economic, and cultural elites among the Kazakhs.<sup>18</sup> Nomadic settlement, a focus of intense scholarly scrutiny and political wrangling, was the consensus position of nearly all actors in the political leadership, including Kazakh communists, as a program to alleviate nomadic poverty. In the midst of its draconian settlement campaign, the regime continued to promote philo-Kazakh policies, including affirmative action and the suppression of open expressions of racism.<sup>19</sup> To put it mildly, the combination of ethnic preferment and ethnic slaughter creates an interpretive conundrum.

Most of the treatments of nomadic settlement have simply sidestepped this conundrum. The Soviet explanation for the debacle was surprisingly open and simple: “excesses” by local leaders had created the disaster.<sup>20</sup> Unlike the famine elsewhere, especially in the Ukraine, Moscow made no attempt to cover-up the Kazakh tragedy and even unleashed a limited campaign among the semipublic sphere of communist activists (local cell meetings, party conferences, party press) to scapegoat Kazakhstan’s party leadership under Fyodor Goloshchekin (r. 1925–1932) for the fiasco. Although this campaign was decisively ended within a year by Moscow’s new viceroy, Levion Mirzoiian (r. 1933–1938), for stoking “local nationalism,” the implications of the campaign are clear: settlement was a proper policy and it had simply been implemented poorly by overzealous or corrupt local officials. Despite the formulaic nature of this “explanation,” a sort of “Dizzy from Success” for the steppe, Western scholarship has often taken it at face value.<sup>21</sup> Most contemporary Kazakh historians reject such excuses and see settlement as part and parcel of a general Soviet colonialism that dispossessed,

murdered, and marginalized nomads in the goal of building a “totalitarian model.”<sup>22</sup> Such an approach, however, reduces Soviet philo-Kazakhism to a sort of “masking” ideology and focuses more on state intentions than policy implementation or, rather, continues to see the problem as “dizziness” but now translated from local officials to central state actors such as Stalin or Goloshchekin. For contemporary historians, the primary nexus of the settlement tragedy lies in the Soviet state’s malevolent gaze on its nomads, while the state itself blamed not its vision, but those who poorly implemented it. These are not, of course, mutually exclusive interpretations. The approach pioneered by Sheila Fitzpatrick to understand the complex dialectic of state campaigns between central authorities and autonomous social actors moves the discussion beyond a sort of “neo-totalitarianism” that privileges state discourse and intentions over the pragmatic politics of implementation, while avoiding the creation of a static hierarchy of policy formulators on top and policy implementers at the bottom. As Fitzpatrick’s classic studies of the cultural revolution, collectivization and everyday Stalinism show, the vision of the Soviet state at the highest levels matters, but so too do the desires, strategic calculation and contingent responses of those who implemented them.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, her very valuable insight into the mechanisms in which these politics played out, especially the “unleashing” of committed cadres, especially within a Cultural Revolutionary context, is particularly valuable in understanding the Kazakhs’ tragedy.

### SEEING LIKE A SOVIET STATE: BOLSHEVIK VISIONS AND THE “EMPTY STEPPE”

The Soviet state fits very comfortably in James Scott’s paradigm of modern states seeking to mobilize their societies through techniques of high modernist rule. Projects to “settle” unfixed populations, in both the colonial and noncolonial context, have been notoriously coercive and brutal despite the governing ideology of the particular state involved.<sup>24</sup> While it may be doubted, *pace* Kate Brown, that Kazakhstan and Montana are nearly the same place, it is undeniable that her comparison of Billings and Karaganda evokes eerie recognitions—recognitions best described by these frontier areas being envisioned as “empty lands” that all-powerful institutions inscribed utopian and productionist schemes upon.<sup>25</sup> Simply put, for Kazakh nomads, the steppe was a “place,” a lived environment shaped by the seasonal habits of pasturage, water holes, winter and summer camps, and the tribal matrix in which resources were distributed, contested, and, occasionally, fought over. Mukhamet Shayakhmetov’s memoir, for instance, is suffused with memories of the steppe as a deeply rooted homeland, every bit as evocative of family and community as the peasant’s village.<sup>26</sup> For the Soviet state, both the central party apparatus and the Republican officials in Kazakhstan, the steppe was largely a “space” and an empty one at that, a *tabula rasa* in which they could and ought to shape with various development policies. Soviet authorities, like Tsarist officials before them, saw the agricultural potential of the

East as largely untapped. As the People's Commissar of Agriculture told the 16th Party Conference, "by calculation there is 50 to 55 million additional hectares of land in Kazakhstan suitable for sowing, of which nearly 36 million are spread along the northern boundaries."<sup>27</sup> Goloshchekin himself complained in 1929 that the "peculiarities" of Kazakhstan "froze its development and laid like a weight on the Kazakh population" and blamed the region's "enormous, empty land expanses."<sup>28</sup>

The land was, in fact, far from empty. The great waves of prewar peasant colonization had extended right up to the limit of dry farming and displaced Kazakh nomads from their pastures. The regime's own agronomists warned the leadership that farming this land was "not only unwarranted but completely impossible" due to its aridity.<sup>29</sup> Crowded into the arid and semiarid portions of their steppe, economically devastated by the results of the 1916 Steppe Revolt, the civil war and the great famine that followed, the average nomadic household could barely find enough pasturage to sustain its miserably small herds. These events so impoverished Kazakhstan's nomads that they lacked the herds to use the pastures ceded back to them in the land reforms of the early 1920s. In fact, the marginalized herdsmen were so poor that 62 percent of them were exempt from taxation.<sup>30</sup>

The regime never seriously considered developing Kazakhstan's marginalized pastoral sector, but rather preferred to transform its allegedly empty land into a new Soviet breadbasket. That goal, however, required settled farmers. One option was to import peasant colonists into the region. In fact, a particularly bold plan put forward by the All-Soviet Resettlement Committee did call for 3.6 million colonists to be settled in Kazakhstan and from 1929 the postrevolutionary ban on colonization in Kazakhstan was lifted. In the short term, however, colonization remained a dead letter since Kazakh elites feared such colonization would further marginalize Kazakhs within their own republic.<sup>31</sup>

Ruling out the Tsarist model of external peasant colonization, the Kazakh party opted instead to uplift its nomads, putatively into advanced forms of grain agriculture and settled ranching.<sup>32</sup> Even prior to the revolution, Kazakh elites of all stripes had largely abandoned faith in nomadism, so this solution was much more *simpatico* with the aspirations of the Kazakh party members than colonization.<sup>33</sup> Nomadism was branded as a backward lifestyle that enslaved its practitioners in poverty and subjugation. Goloshchekin insisted that

the characteristic feature of stock-rearing in Kazakhstan is its extreme backwardness (archaic, uncultivated economic practices, unsystematic development of the herd, nomadizing across vast distances, the low productivity of cattle-rearing, year-round pasturage, periodic losses due to *zhut* [herd kill-offs due to ice storms], disease, etc.). On the basis of this economic backwardness and the low density of settlement (5–7 tents per encampment), the backwardness of social relations (a mix of clan, feudal and market relations), the clan leaders—the *bais*—have economic sovereignty and political influence.<sup>34</sup>



Settlement, therefore, was not simply economic development of the empty steppe, but a moral imperative to uplift “backward” nomads—to free them from cultural deprivation and political oppression. As a Kazakh official, I. Kuramysov, pointed out settlement aimed “to convert the Kazakh economy from patriarchal-clan relations to socialism, passing over capitalism.”<sup>35</sup>

The “construction of socialism,” of course, was the staple of the First Five Year Plan but in Kazakhstan it was applied in a distinctive geographical-administrative matrix shaped by the regime’s taxonomies. This matrix, grandiose in its scope, sought not simply to grid a city, as Brown argues of Karaganda, but the entire steppe. As part of the new “planned” economy, in August 1928, the Kazakh Republic created a new territorial administration at the county level, so-called *raionization*. This reform defined Kazakhstan’s each newly minted county as settled, seminomadic, or nomadic according to the “natural-historical conditions favoring” these activities.<sup>36</sup> This decree was important enough that at least one scholar sees it as “a type of detonator to the entire collectivization campaign in Kazakhstan.”<sup>37</sup> In practice, “settled” counties were equated with farming and nomadic and seminomadic with pastoral stock-rearing. This, in turn, ethnicized local government since the settled counties were dominated by European peasant settlers (80–90 percent of the population), the seminomadic counties being of “mixed” population (5 to 52 percent Kazakh) and the “nomadic” counties being overwhelmingly Kazakh (a minority of southern counties were classified as “settled-irrigated” and were dominated by settled Central Asians such as Uzbeks and Uighurs). Such a schema, as the Kazakh oppositionist Seifullin Sadvokasov pointed out, was extremely artificial: “the agriculture of Kazakhstan is divided between agriculture and livestock rearing, however, there is no sharp boundary between them. If you viewed the economy of the Republic as a chain, at one end would be agriculture, at the other animal husbandry, and in the middle, they would meet.”<sup>38</sup> The most important outcome of *raionization*, however, was to ghettoize nomadic settlement in those counties least able to support intensive ranching or grain agriculture as nomads were rarely settled across county boundaries prior to the refugee crisis.

As the goals of settlement became increasingly tied to large-scale “voluntary” collectivization in late 1929, the influence of “*raionization*” was seen in this campaign’s statistics: nomadic and seminomadic counties had much higher rates of collectivization than settled counties, and reached 90 percent by early 1932 in several of them. The newly settled nomads were particularly vulnerable to Kazakhstan’s collectivizers; among the 1930 and 1931 cohorts of “settled” households, 144,944 or 88 percent were collectivized, well above the Kazakhstan average of 65.2 percent of all rural households at that time. Newly settled nomads were grouped into 1,596 collective farms, which averaged 90 households instead of usual 4–5 households in the precollectivized *aul*.<sup>39</sup> Such collectivization “tempo” were, of course, a boon to provincial party officials seeking to inflate their collectivization numbers but they also represented the utopian aspirations of top

party leaders, who boasted of their successes in transforming the Kazakh *aul* into the Soviet *kolkhoz*.

The newly settled were more vulnerable to such state fantasies because they were literally “displaced”: uprooted with great violence, they were susceptible to other social engineering experiments such as collectivization. And nomadic settlement was extremely violent. Many local settlement campaigns were conducted with almost military precision as armed police and party activists swooped into *auls* and directed nomads to settlement points under armed guard. In Batbakarinsk county, the county’s settlement official drove off the nomad’s cattle and then kidnapped all their children from school to force the population to resettle.<sup>40</sup> A typical case was the settling of the Dzhaïsan “settlement point” in 1932. First, working age people were sent to this “completely bare and isolated” place, but their families, “accompanied by police with rifles” were brought in later, in effect being held hostage until their relatives prepared the settlement. In this case, the *auls* involved received only three days’ notice to prepare for this forced migration.<sup>41</sup> Keeping settlers disoriented was a fundamental aspect of the campaign; for example, during 1932 nine collective farms of 2,000 households each were settled in Lbishchensk county. As a later investigation reported, “the collective farmers were completely ignorant that in the next days they would be resettled.” Although this resettlement involved a tramp of nearly 100 kilometers, the settlers’ food stocks were expropriated and transported ahead of them to the new settlement point, to insure they would not flee, which caused extreme privation. Settlement became a cascade of forced migrations that allowed the prophylactic “purging” of “class-alien elements”: the expropriation and exile of more than 5,500 so-called *kulak-bai* families from the newly established settlement points and collective farms, which provided an added boon to the state.<sup>42</sup> Whether the *auls* had so many “*bais*” is extremely doubtful, but the state expected 2.5 to 3 percent of settlers to be class aliens and it “saw” at least that number.

When, inevitably, such quotas evoked violent resistance among Kazakhs who saw relatives where the state saw “enemies” to be arrested, the state responded with ruthless and highly organized violence. From 1929 to 1931, Kazakhstan saw 372 violent uprisings involving more than 80,000 participants; the regime sent numerous punitive detachments into the *auls* and arrested thousands, of which 5,551 were convicted and 883 executed.<sup>43</sup> As Holquist argues, the Soviet state rarely considered such violence as only repressive but also as an opportunity to pursue larger projects of social hygiene and social engineering.<sup>44</sup> This was certainly the case with settlement. Following the crushing of open resistance, the government accelerated settlement tempos and announced the collectivization of nomads’ property under the rubric of the agricultural *artel* or even commune in “large-scale collective farms” (called “giants”).<sup>45</sup> In effect, this called for the herdsman to surrender ownership of their flocks, an imposition not even demanded of collectivized peasants who, by in large, kept their livestock (except horses) as family property. By August 1931, the bulk of Kazakhstan’s 2,710 collective

farms for recently settled nomads were converted into 516 giant collective farms of 500 to 600 families each, literally increasing settlement patterns from precollectivization *aul* by several orders of magnitude. As Pianciola points out, "in practice, the decision was to concentrate 1.5 million people (a fourth of the population) in these enormous animal raising kolkhozes."<sup>46</sup> The settlements points chosen for these "giants," moreover, had no continuity with *aul* winter and summer camps (unlike the mass of collectivized villages, which replicated existing village communes), again displacing the nomads. The extremely ambitious 1931 settlement plan broke new ground in envisioning the settling of 84,340 households in five contiguous geographic territories consisting of 300 collective farms agglomerated into 51 "nests" across 20 counties.<sup>47</sup>

Such "gigantomania" served the state's need to concentrate the nomads in conveniently consolidated territories to discipline them within the new socialist order. As one 1929 decree put it,

in every province with a settled population we should chose two or three "nests" where the work on settlement can receive a revolutionary form through the immediate construction of large collective farms. The construction of these collective farms should lead to a complex of measures that guarantee the population simultaneously transfer to more cultured economic forms of economy and radically repudiate all traditions.<sup>48</sup>

These settlements were not simply to be places to concentrate the population, but engines of cultural revolution. Well into the famine, Goloshchekin continued to envision these settlements in such terms:

The socialist *aul*—this is a settled *aul*, a village population with European type of dwelling, out-buildings for general agricultural stocks and cattle. Cattle rearing will be a form of commercial farming. Livestock-rearing will be based on fodder silage, on pasture, on feed. The cattle rearing economy will be combined with agriculture.<sup>49</sup>

Such revolutionary forms often went to ludicrous extremes, such as ordering nomads' yurts into a straight line as a sort of faux linear township. A later government commission found these plans, which sought to "catch up and overtake" the animal husbandry practices of such advanced capitalist countries as Denmark, "criminally stupid" and produced by "technical illiterates."<sup>50</sup> These modernizing plans for high-density townships with heavily capitalized stock-rearing would later be ridiculed as, "the idea of building New Yorks in the mountains and steppes."<sup>51</sup>

Such "farms," quite often just roped-off corrals in the middle of the steppe, completely reversed the ecological logic of nomadism by concentrating herds in far larger numbers than pastures could support, while failing to provide a fodder base. Kazakhs could only watch with despair as their animals began to die en masse. One Soviet farm, "Tasbulak," saw its herd decline from 25,450 head in January of 1932 to 1,415 by October of the

same year.<sup>52</sup> With no feedlots, barns, fodder supplies, or right to nomadize for pasture, nomads slaughtered their own herds rather than see them waste away while state procurements reached confiscatory heights. These measures destroyed the nomads' subsistence base; from 1929 to 1934 the herd size of all livestock in Kazakhstan (primarily sheep, cattle, camels, and horses) fell from 40 million to 6 million head with nomadic households accounting for the vast majority of the decline. In some counties, such as Aral'sk and Turgai, the average household could count only 1.5 head of cattle in their possession, obviously inadequate when subsistence was usually pegged to having a herd of at least forty.<sup>53</sup>

Pianciola argues that settlement was motivated primarily by the regime's desire to "etatize" nomads—to "capture" them as state resources for conscription, taxation, and procurements. However, this explanation does little to explain the apparently schizophrenic nature of the campaign. The Kazakh Republic's top leadership roundly attacked "administrationism," the practice of simply coercing nomads into settlements. Local activists and county-level officials were purged and even arrested for being "Dizzy from Success" for such sins. While such rhetoric seems a cynical search for scapegoats, these admonitions were made in closed party meetings and documents marked secret (and thus not part of a public relations campaign); nor was this discourse episodic, as it pervades the settlement campaign. For instance, at a late 1930 Conference of Settlement Officials, notable for the frank discussions by local administrators on the difficulties of collectivizing nomads, especially voluntarily, Goloshchekin laid down the party line: "All the same, as we approach collectivization we can not allow excesses, we can not but study cultural, social and economic backwardness . . . You can not collectivize if you do not lead work among the masses. This [settlement] must be voluntary." To Goloshchekin, the nomads had to "turn" to settlement on their own. He was not a hypocrite about employing coercive methods; his government quite openly advocated violence in extracting meat requisitions from pastoralists and fanned the persecution of "class enemies" in the *aul*. But he was also shrewd enough to understand that for settlement to act as an engine of modernization (in his terms "the great axle around which now turns the reforming, the transfiguring of Kazakhstan and the Kazakh *aul*"<sup>54</sup>), it had to elicit some acceptance from the nomads themselves. If the new settlements became squalid and unproductive camps of dispossessed and dispirited ex-nomads, then these would hardly be "captured" for socialist construction, a goal Pianciola is right to emphasize. Local cadres, however, took a rather different view of the matter.

### SEEING LIKE A SOVIET OFFICIAL: SUPERFLUOUS PEOPLE

From this narration of the envisioning and implementation of settlement, the campaign can be seen as the imposition of modernizing fantasies by a state interested in increasing nomads' "legibility" and the extraction of resources from them. But Goloshchekin's extraordinary hectoring of his

local officials should give one pause. Indeed, the account of Kazakh settlement furnished so far is so dependent on government decrees, party rhetoric, and elite discourse that it is in danger of becoming a cult of personality; a story of a “little Stalin”—Goloshchekin—imposing his own utopian designs on a powerless native society in conformity with Moscow’s vision. The Conference of Settlement Workers, however, reveals a record not simply of “ideological excesses” and “maladministration” from lower officials, but an entirely different reality than that inhabited by top party leaders such as Goloshchekin. At the conference, these officials, who were actually tasked with settlement, made not even a genuflection toward its supposed transformative powers; rather they made excuses about the difficulties in meeting campaign goals and lobbied for more resources. They accepted that settlement must be accomplished but ignored its visionary component, much to Goloshchekin’s annoyance. Rather than accepting the “creative opportunities of mass work,” these men clamored for more credits, more agricultural machinery, more housing, more state veterinary services and, not incidentally, more seed assistance. Goloshchekin mocked this attitude of “if you were only to give us so much lumber, so many nails, so many window panes, then we can get down to work. If you don’t give these out, we can not get to it,” as totally opposed to the goal of building socialism.<sup>55</sup>

The stereotype of lower officials as a category of passively resistant functionaries whose bureaucratic “opportunism” made them poor implementers of the regime’s visions is well-worn but poorly captures Stalinist reality.<sup>56</sup> The officials gathered at the Conference of Settlement Workers were not bureaucrats in Bolshevik parlance but “cadres,” and as such they were expected to be more akin to military commanders on the battlefield than bearers of apolitical expertise such as the “specialists” (a pejorative term in the Stalin Revolution) who manned the Commissariats. Especially in the Soviet borderlands where intensive efforts were conducted to cultivate native cadres and activists, they were not seen as passive “conveyor belts” transmitting central directives to the locales but creative initiators of campaigns to meet the regime goals, including settlement. The staggeringly long and detailed speeches that party cadres were subjected to, as well as the expectation that they would debate and contribute to the formulation of the state’s visionary policy by providing local practical knowledge, should give little doubt that cadres and activists were constructed not so much as bureaucratic implementers but the shock troops of a “revolution of saints.”<sup>57</sup> As Goloshchekin argued,

Cadres—these are not only organizers; cadres—these are not only agronomists who instruct but the activists of the *aul* itself, and the Communist Youth League above all. The cadre is those who are initiators, enthusiasts, yes, even those who commit excesses. Do you think we will accomplish settlement without mistakes and excesses? Of course, it would be better if there weren’t any but without the activists, without these initiators, there would be nothing.<sup>58</sup>

Here, of course Goloshchekin not only named the beast, explaining the importance of local autonomy, but in fact unleashed it. To claim, in late 1930, essentially that “excesses happen,” was to license local cadres to implement state policy with a lot more autonomy than the proverbial wink and a nod.<sup>59</sup>

It is precisely this aspect of the Soviet state, its cadres, that neototalitarian approaches tend to neglect by seeing them as more or less complicit actors in the implementation of high-modernist Bolshevik visions. While cadres’ centrality is fully authorized by the Stalinist slogan “Cadres decide everything!” it is also supported by the central state’s intensive scrutiny of its cadres through endless rituals of purge and repression, well before the 1937 bloodbath.<sup>60</sup> The regime understood that cadres were important and focused an enormous amount of attention on them. Their role is crucial in understanding nomadic settlement.

For, if the Soviet state saw the steppe as empty, local cadres knew it as tightly overcrowded. They, after all, had been administering the contentious land reforms, pasture reallocations, and other measures that had made Kazakhstan’s rural districts anything but peaceful in the 1920s (in 1925 alone, 651 violent confrontations were reported between Kazakhs and European settlers: 130 over land occupations, 164 over pasture occupations, and 157 for “other” reasons).<sup>61</sup> While ethnic conflict was epidemic in the settler-dominated agricultural areas of the North, the nomadic regions of Kazakhstan faced endemic tribal conflict (leading to the slogan, “replace clan struggle with class struggle”). Moreover, when local communists talked of “capturing” local nomads, they meant the phrase rather more literally than recruiting enthusiasts for socialist construction. During first major wave of government-fomented class war in the *aul*, 1928’s expropriation and exile of 700 “semi-feudal *bais*,” a relatively targeted attack on nomadic notables turned into a “bacchanalia” of expropriation in the colonist-dominated province of Semipalatinsk. A total of 17,000 families here, not the several hundred who had been targeted, suffered confiscations of all or part of their herds. The local European cadres justified this action with the defense that dispossessing *bais* was quite a bit more complex than seizing *kulak* goods, thanks to the Kazakh institution of *suann* (a sort of cattle-rearing sharecropping, in which the bulk of the *bai*’s herd was leased to his relatives, who were allowed to keep all the animals’ milk, wool, etc. in exchange for pasturing them). Given the difficulties of disentangling ownership in such conditions, the local party (over the opposition of its Kazakh cadres) used *suann* as a justification for massive requisitions of animals. Everybody and anybody with state authority in Semipalatinsk began to invent new duties to impose on its nomads; in one illustrative example, the school board in one town imposed a “voluntary contribution” of 2,000 head of livestock for school construction (in a European settlement), which ruined the local nomads. Measures such as hostage taking, arbitrary arrests, punitive taxation, and high requisitions pumped resources out of the *auls* into state coffers. While the local party leadership was purged for these “excesses,” the

impulse to turn targeted expropriations into naked dispossession was not a rare occurrence.<sup>62</sup>

While the “Semipalatinsk Affair” clearly reflected ethnic animosity in a region heavily contested between native and colonizer, not all such expropriations were so structured. Kazakh officials, for example, perpetrated similar acts against the Adaev Kazakhs on the Mangyshlack peninsula. Even before the Great Leap Forward, local cadres had a tendency to impose “Stalinist simplification” on messy Soviet reality.<sup>63</sup> The impulse to seize nomadic resources at the local level, while not inconsistent with Scott’s ideas about simplification and legibility, actually track much better to Amartya Sen’s ideas of “entitlement failures.”<sup>64</sup> Or put another way, though putatively a favored constituency, local cadres often treated Kazakhs as unproductive savages (*dikié*) from whom no productive return would come on investments made. This logic transformed nomads into superfluous people with limited entitlements to state resources and whose own resources were more usefully seized for other, allegedly more productive, purposes.

This “logic” is laid bare by examining the way local cadres chose “settlement points” for the nomads. The government mandated that all settlement points should possess a permanent ground water supply, the possibility of supporting twenty families and to have been fully surveyed. In practice, such sites had usually already been promised to Kazakhstan’s Commissariat of Agriculture for its new State Farm network or had already been settled by Slavic migrants—in effect, their entitlement to it trumped the nomads.<sup>65</sup> When politically powerful constituencies, especially the state farms, objected to the placement of settlement points, officials simply moved them 100 or even 200 miles further into the steppe.<sup>66</sup> Despite having nomadized for centuries in the steppe, the nomads were not usually consulted on their own preferences for good sites, nor were they settled on the winter encampments, many of which had permanent buildings, stable water supplies, and even fields sown with winter wheat. As the Kazakh communist Turar Ryskulov pointed out to Stalin in a personal appeal, more than 70,000 fixed winter encampments were abandoned during settlement.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, those with the power to actually choose settlement points—local cadres—rarely had the least idea where settlement would be sustainable. In Zharinsk county, for example, of fifty settlement points, only five had actually been examined before nomads were settled on them.<sup>68</sup> But clearly, many sites were chosen on deliberately marginal land. In one county, Kaskapaïsk, not one of 37 settlement points chosen had access to clean water or useable meadows. According to Mirzoian, “here people, living people, a living *aul*, was replanted on stones, without water, without arable land, without pastures.”<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Kazakhstan resettled nearly 70 percent of its nomads in “settlement points” incapable of supporting any sort of settlement. As a government investigation would later note, “the settlement points chosen were and remain, in significant measure, shamefully useless to anyone; the population’s monetary resources and material labor expended on them has been tossed on the wind.”<sup>70</sup>

This last point illustrates a fundamental dynamic of settlement: settlers were on their own. In 1930, for instance, the state promised a then immense budgetary outlay of 19 million rubles (mostly in agricultural credits) to settle 84,000 households. Very little of this state money actually reached the nomads as county construction agencies paid themselves munificent overhead and provided almost no infrastructure. Of the 84,000 newly settled households in 1930, for example, only 1815 houses, 15 cattle pens, and 7 barns were built. This neglect was hardly accidental. In several provinces, settlement financing was diverted to Slavic peasant villages because “the Kazakhs can not profit from it, so it needs to be used where it will have ‘more effect’.”<sup>71</sup> So little settlement aid actually reached the newly settled in Zharinsk county that state auditors complained of “the outrageous lack of responsibility and criminal inactivity of the county party and government leadership” and declared the nomads “self-settled.”<sup>72</sup> In fact, despite the grandiose plans of the center, most nomads were “self-settled.”

While the ex-nomadic settlers found themselves in desperate straits from the get-go, they were not “neglected” by local cadres. In fact, neglect might have been preferable. For, by an ironic twist of their lifestyle, Kazakhstan’s nomads were far less subsistence-oriented than its peasants, and thus, far more exploitable. Nomads ate much less meat than was commonly believed and preferred marketing their animals to obtain grain (mostly barley and millet), which provided more nutritional bang for the ruble than mutton.<sup>73</sup> Due to their concern to maintain animals as a milk base and insure against natural losses, there was a widespread perspective among Soviet officialdom that, as the Head of Kazakhstan’s Statistical Bureau Sokolovskii put it, “the Kazakhs were saving their herds excessively.”<sup>74</sup> This utter ignorance of the actual nomadic economy created an image of Kazakh meat hoarding that provoked harsh procurement targets. As Goloshchekin sarcastically asked, “meat is extremely difficult to procure. Tell me, do they eat meat in the *aul*? Without a doubt, they eat a lot of it but they do not want to share it with the workers.”<sup>75</sup> In fact, nomads sold meat to eat grain, but the government ratcheted up meat procurements nonetheless from 2.3 million quintals in 1928/29 and 1930 to 4.7 million quintals in 1931, most of it from nomadic and seminomadic counties.<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, newly settled Kazakhs had to make not only onerous deliveries of meat to the state but the highest *grain* procurements in Kazakhstan as well.<sup>77</sup> When the 1931 harvest’s procurement plan had been met by only 53.4 percent across the entire Republic, local cadres turned the screws of repression up on all collective farms but found the ex-nomads to be especially vulnerable. A secret police report noted that in Pavlodar province *aul* soviets were told to, “seize all of the grain, to use all methods short of beating” and that such methods had already led to forty famine deaths in one *aul* of exiled “*bais*.”<sup>78</sup> Another secret police report discovered that recently settled nomads were eating “cats, dogs and carrion” after their last grain had been taken.<sup>79</sup> Due to the state’s practice of basing grain procurement quotas in settled collective farms on fallow and sown land, not simply sown land



(as was the practice in peasant collective farms), the recently settled nomads faced far higher grain procurement targets than their experienced farming neighbors.<sup>80</sup>

Given such methods, it is hardly surprising that all but two of the nomadic and seminomadic counties met Kazakhstan's average in fulfilling the 1930 grain procurement plan, and twenty-three exceed the average, in one case by 130 percent; meanwhile the meat procurement plan was universally over-fulfilled by the same counties.<sup>81</sup> The practice of milking the recently settled for procurements was so obvious that in 1930 Kazakhstan's representative pleaded with Molotov not to increase the Republic's grain procurement plan, since "here I must clearly declare that the increase weighs most heavily on the Kazakh population that is in the course of being settled." In response, Molotov raised Kazakhstan's quota not two million *pudy* but three.<sup>82</sup> Following the collapse of Kazakhstan's herd, Isaev complained to Stalin that, "it was not the state meat procurements that were especially important in decreasing the number of livestock but the bureaucratic transformation of semi-desert counties with pastoral economies into 'agricultural counties.'" Isaev understood the basic mechanism that magically transformed the nomadic encampment into a "breadbasket": "in the *aul*, it is easier to create any sort of outrage, with less opposition the most savage misrule (*proizvol*) can be conducted." He also presciently warned, "however, nomadic pastoralism is less resilient to the games played with it."<sup>83</sup> These abuses were most scandalous in the cattle-rearing Soviet farms. In Aktiubinsk the newly settled lost their herds to huge state livestock farms that suffered staggering kill-offs. The result: "In these counties we had large-scale food difficulties, in connection with which the Central Committee released a good deal of food aid. We have had a mass outflow of population from these nomadic and semi-nomadic counties."<sup>84</sup> Their herds were even expropriated by county officials for peasant collective farms. As Ryskulov complained to Stalin, "in many different places an ancient tradition has been revived: if there is a loss of animals in Russian villages, this is inevitably recouped at the Kazakhs' expense."<sup>85</sup>

As the number of their animals plummeted, once settled nomads took to the tramp in search of food. The government later estimated that 286,000 families (about a million persons) fled the Republic in 1930 and 1931, with a further 78,000 (or about 275,000 persons) in 1932 and 31,000 (about 110,000 persons) in 1933. Other estimates concluded that 200,000 had fled to China and a million to other Soviet republics.<sup>86</sup> And these estimates, of course, do not take into account the enormous refugee movement within Kazakhstan's borders. At the end of 1932, Isaev reported to Molotov that in 60 of the 117 counties the number of nomadic households had decreased 27% within just the previous six months.<sup>87</sup> The local cadres, who had been so instrumental in the hunger refugees' impoverishment, viewed their plight with indifference. European officials considered the refugees to be "Kazakh business" and, as Ryskulov bitterly related, were simply "indifferent to and uninvolved in the mass death of Kazakhs."<sup>88</sup> When, for example, 1300

starving refugees arrived at Aral'sk—where they'd been told to gather for assistance—they soon “found themselves in the most horrible conditions; when they arrived in Aralsk, despite the cold, they were turned out onto the street with their children and ill.” The streets of Aral'sk became littered with the corpses of the refugees.<sup>89</sup> With clear racist overtones, Russian party cadres told the collective farmers that “Kazakhs are unable to work, don't understand anything and should be beaten and driven from the settlements as gold-brickers and thieves.” Numerous cases of anti-Kazakh violence resulted.<sup>90</sup> For their part, Kazakh cadres (nearly a quarter of the party) also wanted the problem of starving nomads to simply go away. In one illustrative example, local Kazakh cadres advised newly settled nomads to flee: “there is not going to be any settlement, you are already without livestock. You will all die of hunger this winter: escape to where there is grain.”<sup>91</sup> While indubitably a plausible warning, top Kazakh communists such as Isaev considered such advice treasonous and denounced Kazakh cadres as “false activists” (*lzhebel'sendy*) who acted as “a new parasitic layer in the *aul*.”<sup>92</sup> He understood, in effect, that to these cadres the ex-nomads had become superfluous people, “gold-brickers and thieves” simply because no more resources could be wrung out of them.

### MOSCOW AND THE FAMINE; LICENSE REVOKED

It is tempting to reify the Soviet state and claim that the local cadres' exploitation of and indifference to the newly settled Kazakhs expressed the higher will of regime. Pianciola's point, for example, that “in the early 1930s the Kazakh refugees found themselves on the lowest rung in the hierarchy of productive usefulness to the state” is inarguable. It is much more difficult, however, to concur with him that “mass extermination, while hardly the objective of the “center” was a price the regime was willing to pay to gain political and economic control of the area.”<sup>93</sup> The state expended enormous resources to avoid “mass extermination,” unfortunately it was rather indifferent in monitoring the use of these resources. As Fitzpatrick pointed out in her study of collectivization, the Soviet state did not have the resources in the countryside to closely monitor day-to-day management of its many political campaigns and preferred episodic mobilizations such as “procurement campaigns” usually conducted through rural “strong points,” such as Machine Tractor stations and county party committees.<sup>94</sup> And nomadic settlement followed this model as Kazakhstan's leadership focused on numerous other large-scale state mobilizations such as crash industrialization, peasant collectivization, and the construction of a network of penal labor camps. In fact, up until November 17, 1932 the allegedly totalitarian state did not even detail the People's Commissariat of Agriculture to administer nomadic settlement (up until then nomad settlement was monitored more than directed by an ad hoc Committee on Settlement attached to the government which had very little staff or budget). Even in June 1934, the Republic had appallingly few civil servants directing settlement; in all of the vast and important Alma-Ata

province only thirteen government employees (including one veterinarian and two agronomists) had been detailed to oversee hundreds of thousands of settled nomads.<sup>95</sup>

As J. Arch Getty has pointed out, the Stalinist state tended not so much to direct campaigns such as collectivization as “unleash” them. In practice, this involved ceding substantial operation authority to cadres rather than the center (Moscow or Alma-Ata in this case). And while the “Dizzy from Success” practice of blaming local officials for the chaos such campaigns predictably produced was certainly a cynical political ploy, it also represented real frustration with cadres’ redirecting state campaigns into channels that reinforced their authority while poaching on Moscow’s.<sup>96</sup> But while Getty’s approach is a sophisticated look at the fractures within the Soviet state, it takes Moscow’s protestations rather too seriously. If it is true that the center unleashed the dogs, it is rather harder to believe it could not call them off, or indeed wanted to. Both Moscow and Alma-Ata were quite effective in monitoring and repressing recalcitrant cadres for such capacious sins as “right-wing opportunism” or “left-wing infantilism” when it suited their purposes. As the crackdown following the Semipalatinsk Affair indicates, Goloshchekin, with the full support of Moscow, could conduct a rather thorough house-cleaning when necessary. Moreover, on high-priority campaigns, such as grain procurement, the center did not flinch at repressing cadres or demanding that they repress their citizens. The procurement directives given by Goloshchekin to his provincial bosses at the height of the famine make blood-curdling reading; local cadres were threatened with the North Caucasus’ model of repression where whole villages were deported and dozens of local cadres shot for failure to meet centrally imposed targets.<sup>97</sup> Although Getty’s argument that the regime found reining in local “excesses” quite frustrating is convincing, such “excesses” were clearly licensed by the regime at the highest levels. As an impolitic Goloshchekin, upset at being publicly condemned for his own “excesses” following his sacking in early 1933, writing to Lazar Kaganovich complained, “in the course of seven and a half years I conducted an anti-party, anti-Leninist policy and the Central Committee not only did not know about this, but approved my leadership and had faith in me throughout this time period?”<sup>98</sup>

At the end of 1932, however, Moscow chose to revoke its licenses and the circumstances of their revocation tell us a good deal about how Stalin’s political order actually worked. Although one might surmise that the ongoing starvation of millions would have drawn Moscow’s gaze, in fact the regime’s attention was not captured by mass hunger, which had already dominated the steppe by 1931. Instead, it seems the leashing of lower cadres came due to lobbying from Goloshchekin’s fellow regional viceroys, who considered his inability to contain the disorder of the settlement drive within his own boundaries inexcusable. The regime made little effort to ascertain the number of famine refugees within Kazakhstan’s boundaries but dispatched emissaries to fix the numbers outside the Republic. Again, these numbers were quite large. In 1933 one such emissary determined that at least 40,000

nomadic refugees had fled to the Middle Volga, 100,000 into Kirgizia, 50,000 to Western Siberia, 20,00 to Kara-Kalpakia, 30,000 to Central Asia, and 220,000 further afield.<sup>99</sup> Such numbers created major problems for their “hosts” by stressing food and housing supplies, introducing large-scale epidemics of cholera and typhoid fever, and triggering major waves of Russian racism as rumor accused Kazakhs of cannibalism and horse rustling.<sup>100</sup> These host regions exerted intense pressure on Kazakhstan to end refugee flight, which Goloshchekin fatuously explained as a sort of *wunderlust*:

The Kazakh, who never left his *aul*, now knows how to travel beyond his nomadic path, and can travel with ease from region to region within Kazakhstan, including to Russian and Ukrainian collective farms and to work on economic constructions on the Volga and in Siberia.<sup>101</sup>

Goloshchekin’s fellow viceroys were having none of this; the head of the Western Siberian party committee, R. I. Eikhe, essentially told Goloshchekin not to presume on his credulity:

You write in your letter of 20 March that the nomadic refugees not only in this year but all such refugees can not be considered to be fleeing famine. It seems to us that the Kazakh regional committee is obviously misinformed by its local organizations if it considers that this year’s nomad flight can be compared in some degree to that of past years.

Significantly, Eikhe warned Goloshchekin that his local organizations had misinformed him. Eikhe insisted on immediate repatriation and cavalierly noted, “Certainly, this is a difficult task and will entail more victims, but Kazakhstan, both with help from the center, and with only its own resources, will be able to complete it.”<sup>102</sup> Thus, Kazakhstan’s problem rebounded back to its own doorstep.

More importantly, Moscow had been roused. While the Central Executive Committee, the putative legislature of the Soviet Union, had been sending off worried memo after worried memo concerning Kazakhstan’s settlement debacle, now, in the fall of 1932, the party Central Committee took heed. While the details are still murky, it seems that in preparation for the September plenum of the Central Committee the Politbiuro, probably after hearing from the party chiefs ringing Kazakhstan, decided to act. It issued a resolution, though couched in the language of reviving livestock rearing, that laid down a fundamental shift in settlement policy. Decrying the “lack of accounting for national peculiarities,” and the habit of socializing livestock, “down to the last chicken,” it ordered the dissolution of “giant” communal collective farms, the establishment of much less densely populated settlements, “desocialization” of livestock, and a limited tolerance of pastoralism. In fixing blame for “deviations in collectivization affairs,” the Central Committee singled out not Goloshchekin and his top lieutenants but “false *aul* activists and even several county party organizations and individual links of the provincial and Republican apparatus.”<sup>103</sup> The resolution redistributed

desocialized sheep back to individual families and allowed ex-nomads, in the nomadic and seminomadic counties, the unprecedented privilege of owning up to 100 sheep, ten cows, five camels, and ten horses—numbers that would surely have gotten one “*debaized*” only weeks earlier.<sup>104</sup> The resolution could have been written by Goloshchekin himself as it reaffirmed settlement as “the proper line” (right down to the “organization of villages with housing of the European type”), but insisted it could be “successfully fulfilled only on the basis of the voluntarily wide participation and self-actualization (*samodeiatel’nost’*) of the poor masses themselves.” The Central Committee also exempted Kazakhs in nomadic and seminomadic countries from all procurements and taxes, while making 2 million *pudy* (roughly 40,000 tons) of grain available as food aid and seed loans for the newly settled. Moreover, the Politbiuro lowered Kazakhstan’s grain procurement targets by 3 million *pudy* and forgave 1 million *pudy* of grain already “loaned” as aid to the starving.<sup>105</sup> This was an extraordinary boon given to Kazakhstan’s party leadership at a time when Moscow was ruthlessly squeezing the Ukraine, North Caucasus, and lower Volga for grain.

While Moscow had shown support for the long-range goals of settlement, it had clearly signaled to Goloshchekin that he must put his local cadres back into harness to actually settle his nomads, not drive them off as famine refugees. Kazakhstan’s leadership got the message: following this Central Committee resolution Kazakhstan’s People’s Commissariat of Agriculture finally set up a dedicated subdepartment to administer nomad settlement. Unfortunately for Kazakhstan’s leadership, local cadres showed little interest in the midst of a horrible famine to surrender their rights to define subsistence entitlements. The “desocialization” of collective farm herds proved to be a debacle. Local Kazakh activists, the much-reviled “*lzhebel’sendy*,” preferred to redistribute the livestock among themselves rather than share it with rank-and-file collective farmers. In fact, in some locales they seized so much decollectivized cattle for themselves that “desocialization” caused a wave of famine deaths among rank-and-file settled nomads.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, the records of dozens of inspection tours taken over the winter of 1932/33 to implement the “historic” September Resolution found an appalling number of counties had almost completely ignored its dictats, except to desocialize collective farm cattle in cadres’ interests.<sup>107</sup>

Russian cadres showed just as slight solicitude for their wards as the so-called *lzhebel’sendy*. Here, it was the distribution of food aid and seed loans—nearly 6 million *pudy* (about 120,000 tons) worth from October of 1932 to January of 1934—that proved too tempting.<sup>108</sup> Rather than state-distributed grain aid, much of it denominated as “seed loans,” reaching the hundreds of thousands of repatriated refugees and nomad settlers, much of it was simply hijacked for other constituencies. Tracking one distribution of food assistance is illustrative; in October 1932, Moscow freed up a million *pudy* of grain to aid starving Kazakhs; only 111,066 of which actually reached the starving. A later government investigation complained of a litany of abuses. One county’s local activists stole grain aid and sold it on the black

market, "leading to an increase in the population's mortality." In another, more than half of the 39,000 *pudy* of food aid was sent right back to the state as the county's grain procurement, "and the refugees themselves were left without bread and were doomed to death."<sup>109</sup> Western Kazakhstan province distributed only 127,700 of its 736,5000 kilograms in food assistance and most of this was diverted to "special settlements" of exiled *kulaks* working at compulsory labor!<sup>110</sup> When settled nomads were given any food aid, it was often tied to productivity quotas they could not achieve in their famine ravished conditions: at one rice-growing state farm death rates of up to 50 percent among Kazakhs was considered by its managers, "an absolutely normal occurrence."<sup>111</sup> The lowest rung again.

The center, however, was not only now watching, it had appointed an effective auditor, Ryskulov, a political enemy of Goloshchekin, to monitor the implementation of its decrees. Clearly not up to the job of reining in his cadres, Goloshchekin was fired and an outsider, the Armenian Levion Mirzoian, was given his job. Rather than staffing his inner circle with clients, Mirzoian shrewdly kept on some of Goloshchekin's team and recruited marginalized Kazakh communists to leading positions. More importantly, he quickly came to the conclusion that a thorough purge of local cadres would be needed to avoid Goloshchekin's fate. At a regional party conference in mid-1933, Mirzoian unleashed a torrent of criticism against his predecessor's "hare-brained scheming" and set a clear tone that the "excesses" of the past would not be tolerated. To make his point, he unveiled a Central Control Commission report at this conference that named names and detailed punishments for local abuses.<sup>112</sup> Pianciola argues that the center never took settlement abuses seriously because only "soft-line" institutions with little power to enforce their concerns took the part of the nomads.<sup>113</sup> In fact, Mirzoian relied on just about the most "hard-line" institutions available to him, the party disciplinary agency, the secret police and the judiciary to conduct a very thorough investigation of wrongdoing. Hundreds of local officials were given career sanctions, purged or arrested for malfeasance. In Alma-Ata province alone, 151 officials were convicted of embezzling food aid while in Aktiubinsk province 71 "responsible persons" were arrested for "ignoring the directives of the party and government on settling the nomadic refugees."<sup>114</sup> These prosecutions, which were accompanied by a remarkably frank press campaign, represented a clear "signalization" to local cadres that settlement was as high a state priority as collectivization, which had been signaled by purge of "right opportunist elements" in 1929.

While famine deaths would continue well into the next year, Mirzoian's change of "signals," along with coercive "sowing campaigns" every bit as ruthless as Goloshchekin's methods, turned the situation around.<sup>115</sup> More importantly, repatriation of famine refugees allowed Kazakhstan to conduct a "resettlement" campaign by providing infrastructure to the ex-nomads; the party strained every effort to provide them with agricultural tools, housing, and seed to become at least indifferent peasants rather than indigent vagabonds. The traumatized and destitute returning refugees had no choice

but to agree; they had been stripped of their herds. Mirzoian even went to the unheard of (and none-to-successful) extremity of settling a number of refugees in relatively prosperous Slavic collective farms as well as impose hiring quotas for them in industrial enterprises. This “resettlement” campaign was far more effective than the original variant: of the 242,000 nomad families forcibly settled between 1930 and 1932, only 70,500 of them were classified as “fully settled” in 1934 (40,600 in European-style settlements and 29,900 in their own *yurts*).<sup>116</sup> But by 1936, at least 400,000 refugees had returned (voluntarily or otherwise) to the Republic and had been “set up” in some sort of livelihood.<sup>117</sup>

## CONCLUSION: A MACHINE TO TURN NOMADS INTO VAGABONDS

Nomadism, however, was not one of these livelihoods, even though a sort of nostalgia for a time when Kazakhs could feed themselves crept into some of the Party’s public discourse.<sup>118</sup> It is not difficult to understand why. The famine refugees required large-scale subsidies from the state, including the purchase of hundreds of thousands of head of cattle from abroad and millions of rubles in equipment and seed loans they had no hope of paying back.<sup>119</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick has found that the Russian peasantry quickly abandoned its precollectivization goal of self-sufficiency to seek support from a socialist state remarkably resistant to building a welfare state.<sup>120</sup> While the state seems to have more or less successfully resisted Russian *kolkhozniki*’s attempts to obtain social welfare, Kazakh former nomads were much more successful in such claims. In the aftermath of the settlement calamity, Kazakhs essentially became “wards of the state” through the state farm system, which paid wages and agricultural subsidies, and subsidized collective farms. This successful appeal to state paternalism can only be considered a very provisional victory for the Kazakhs as their state and collective farms became functional “reservations” that mired former nomads in poverty and cultural deprivation.

State paternalism, however, had its limits as an outraged Politburo rejected Mirzoian’s importuning for future food aid in 1934 with the complaint “that Kazakhstan has been given already maximum and even over-excessive aid, of which not even one other region or province in the USSR could dream.” It claimed that further aid would “be a reward to the vagabond elements in Kazakhstan and their habit of galloping from one end of the republic to the other; it transforms flight into a profession for the receipt of state subsidies.”<sup>121</sup> This malevolent fantasy of nomads willfully taking to the tramp simply to milk the state for its miserable charity is certainly ironic; after all, the Soviet policy of forced settlement served, in effect, to turn “uncaptured” nomads into dependent vagabonds.

Nomadic settlement in Kazakhstan vindicates many of the views of neotalitarians and James Scott. A high modernist, visionary campaign unleashed with a plenitude of state power destroyed local knowledge about how to use the steppe as a subsistence resource and therefore came to grief. If the

steppe was in no way empty when the Soviets undertook to settle its denizens, it certainly was afterwards. From 1926 to 1937 the population of rural Kazakhs in Kazakhtan fell by 490,000 households or about 2.6 million persons.<sup>122</sup> While official statistics record a decline of Kazakhstan's population as a whole by nearly 1.5 million from 1929 to 1934, the rural population fell in the same period by more than two million.<sup>123</sup> The rural population of Kazakhstan had been threshed with an iron flail. It is important to understand that these population declines took place in a context of heavy immigration from the rest of the Soviet Union. In her study of the population dynamics in Central Kazakhstan *okrug* (centered on Karaganda), precisely the areas deemed nomadic and seminomadic to be settled, Kozina discovered a decline of the Kazakh population by 50 percent from 1926 to 1939 while the population of the province as a whole increased by 78.5 percent.<sup>124</sup> This "emptied" steppe would receive hundreds of thousands of deported "special settlers" in the early 1930s and, by a sort of terrible symmetry, about 1.2 million deported nationalities in the late 1930s and 1940s;<sup>125</sup> in other words, almost the same number of nomads killed in the famine.

Contemporary Kazakh historians, then, have good reason for seeing nomadic settlement as a particularly vicious form of external colonialism. Indeed, they would be supported in this assessment by one anonymous Soviet official who concluded, "No English colonialist, nor even a Spanish one, was ever able to create conditions as oppressive as those, which under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and in the Kazak Socialist Soviet Republic too, were imposed against the Kazakhs."<sup>126</sup> And yet, unlike the so-called "punished peoples," collective vilification of the Kazakhs never occurred despite efforts by some of Kazakhstan's political leaders to make such claims. For example, when Goloshchekin attempted to exonerate his administration from guilt for the famine refugees by branding them as counterrevolutionary, Eikhe rebuffed him: "Indubitably among the nomadic refugees *bai-kulaks* led and continue to conduct counter-revolutionary work—this is not news. The issue is this, why in this year is the counter-revolutionary work of the *bai-kulaks* so effective that they have managed to attract thousands of poor and middling households"<sup>127</sup> Moreover, a large fraction of the Communist leadership in Kazakhstan was purged in 1933 for its "excesses." Implicit in this fatuous formulation is the rhetorical exoneration of most Kazakhs. Even with the savage repression of Kazakh intellectuals beginning in 1928 and especially in the purges,<sup>128</sup> Kazakhs as a whole never became a sort of "enemy nation" as Chechens were explicitly and Ukrainians implicitly labeled by the Kremlin.

Nomadic settlement did not result in catastrophe because of the way the Soviet state "saw," although its field of vision certainly shaped what it chose to scrutinize. Nor did local cadres' exploitation and marginalization of nomads simply recapitulate the colonial domination of the prerevolutionary period; nomads, after all, as wards of the state were granted privileges denied to most Slavic settlers and all deportees. While discussions of the settlement campaign as an attempt to "etatize" nomads or to impose a new



colonial domination on them capture important aspects of the campaign, they miss other important dynamics. Settlement, instead, must be seen as complex dialectic between the regime, whose gaze was often averted from the implementation of its dictates, and its cadres who, far from being blind state agents, knew how to look to aggrandizing their own power.

## NOTES

1. I would like to thank Emory University's University Research Fund and Institute for Critical International Studies for funding the research in Almaty on which this paper is based. Early drafts of this work were presented at the Emory History Department's Lockmiller Seminar and the Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, both of which provided very valuable feedback. I would particularly like to thank the core of scholars working on Stalinist Kazakhstan, in particular Niccola Pianciola, Isabelle Ohayon, Sarah Cameron, and Robert Kindler for extremely stimulating conversations. While I suspect each would disagree with a good many of my conclusions I benefitted enormously from their insights and comradeship.
2. Valerii Mikhailov, *Khronika velikogo dzhuta* (Almaty: Zhalyln, 1996), 5. An *aul* was the migratory unit of Kazakh nomads, often translated as "encampment."
3. *Noveishaia istoriia Kazakhstana; sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, sost. K. Karazhaov, A. S. Takenov (Almaty: Sanat, 1998), 241. For an elegiac description of nomadic migration, see Mukhamet Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Story of the Kazakh Nomads Under Stalin* (London: Overlook/Rookery, 2006), 3–10.
4. See Zh B. Abylkhozin, *Traditsionnaia struktura Kazakhstan; sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie aspekty funktsionirovanie i transformatsii (1920–1930-e gg.)* (Alma-ata: Ghylym, 1991), 210–227.
5. James Scott, *Seeing like a State; How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 95; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times, Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9–10, 27–71.
6. For the best overview in English of Kazakh settlement, see Niccola Pianciola's "Famine in the Steppe; The Collectivization of Agriculture and the Kazakh Herdsman, 1928–1934," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 45/1–2, (Janvier-juin 2004): 137–192. I owe a great debt to his research and interpretive framework, especially concerning "etatization" of the nomads, and also from his collegial conversations. Isabelle Ohayon's *La sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l'URSS de Staline: Collectivisation et changement social (1928–1945)* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2006) is the most comprehensive account in a Western language on sedentarization in particular but see Niccola Pianciola, *Stalinsimo di frontiera: colonizzazione Agricola, sterminio dei nomadi e costruzione statle in Asia central, 1905–1936* (Roma: Viella, 2009) for a comprehensive treatment of denomadization in Kazakhstan. For the standard treatment prior to the opening of the archives, see Martha Brill Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan," *Russian Review* 40, no. 2 (April 1981): 122–43.
7. The high end of this estimate, 2.2 million, is contained in a 1991 report by a commission of Kazakhstan's Academy of Sciences appointed to study collectivization. "Zakliuchenie komissii Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta Respublika

- Kazakhstan po postanovlenii KazTsIK i SNK KASSR," in *Nasil'stvennaia kollektivizatsii i golod v Kazakhstane 1931–1933 gg.*, *Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Almaty: XXI vek, 1998), 15. Other estimates tend to be lower. Both Maksudov and Abylkhozin et al. give a number closer to 1.75 million (1.4 million of whom were Kazakhs). See Abylkhozhin, Zh. B., M. K. Kozybaev, and M. B. Tatimov, *Kazakhskaiia tragediia*, "Voprosy istorii, 2 (1989). S. Maksudov, "Migratsii v SSSR v 1926–1939 godah," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1999): 770–792. Davies and Wheatcroft subject the statistics to close analysis and estimate "excess deaths" in Kazakhstan at 1.3 to 1.4 million, 1.1 million of whom were Kazakhs. R. W. Davies, and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Industrialization of Russia*, vol. 5 *The Years of Hunger; Soviet Agriculture, 1931–1933* (New York, London: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2004), 409, 412.
8. Zh. Abylkhozin, K. Aldazhumanov, Iu. Romanov, "Kazakstan in the system of <<kazarmennyi socialism>>," in M. K. Kozybaev, ed., *History of Kazakhstan; Essays* (Almaty: Gylm, 1998), 155.
  9. Robert Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror Famine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 196. Beyond the scholarship cited in footnotes, see the leading studies in Kazakh, T. O. Omarbekov, *Zobalang: kushtep uzbymdastyrugba qarsylyq 1929–1931 zhyldary bolghan khalyq narazyghy* (Almaty: Sanat, 1995), idem, *20–30 zhyldardagy Kazakstan kasiregi* (Almaty: Sanat, 1992). My thanks to Sarah Cameron for discussing these Kazakh-language citations with me.
  10. One estimate has 1.5 million of the 1.75 million excess deaths as nomadic Kazakhs. Abylkhozin et al., "Kazakstan in the system of <<kazarmennyi socialism>>," 155. The higher Kazakh Academy of Sciences' death estimates report roughly the same number of non-Kazakh deaths, 259,000, the largest number of which were Ukrainian and Russian peasants (100,000 and 85,000 respectively). While all ethnicities suffered during the famine the settled ethnicities lost from 6 to 13 percent of their population while the only other ethnicity with a nomadic lifestyle in Kazakhstan, the small Kirgiz population, lost 25 percent of its population; see *Nasil'tvennaia kollektivizatsiia*, 15. See also Gul'den Bulatovna Karagizovna, "Likvidatsiia posledstviia nasil'stennoi kollektivizatsii i problemy sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi rasvitiia aula i sela v Kazakhstana (1933–44gg.)," (PhD diss., Kazakhskii gosudarstvennyi natsional'nyi universitet imeni Al' Farabi, Almaty, 2002), 20.
  11. Kate Brown, "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana Are Nearly the Same Place," *The American Historical Review*, 106/1 (February 2001), 17–48.
  12. *Golod v Kazakhskom stepi; Pis'ma trevogi i boli* (Almaty: Qazaq Universiteti, 1991), 119.
  13. Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
  14. Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), 187; A. B. Tursunbaev, *Kollektivizatsiia sel'skogo khoziaistvo Kazakhstana, 1926–1941 gg.* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1967), vol. 2, 392. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 140.
  15. See Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 101, 115.
  16. The government later estimated that 286,000 families (about a million persons) fled the Republic in 1930 and 1931, a further 78,000 (or about 275,000 persons) in 1932 and 31,000 (about 110,000 persons) in 1933. See Pianciola,

- "Famine in the Steppe," 170. Other estimates concluded that 200,000 had fled to China. Afghanistan, Persia, and Mongolia also received thousands of refugee nomads. *Nasil'stvannaia kollektivizatsiia*, 85–86.
17. For Soviet philonationalism, see Yuri Sleazkine, "The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How the Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 55/4 (1996): 826–862 and Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
  18. For nomadic outreach policies see, for example, Paula Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2003) and Matthew Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 2001), esp. ch. 5.
  19. For punishment of expressions of racism, see, Soiuznaia Kommunisticheskaiia Partiia (bol'shevikov), *Materialy otchetu KraiKK-NK RKI KASSR Vos'mom Kraevoi Partiinoi konferentsii* (Alma-Ata: Zakrytaia tipografiia Qaz TsIK i SNK KASSR, 1934). Henceforth *Krai KK-NK RKI*.
  20. *Krai KK-NK RKI*, 3.
  21. Olcott, "The Collectivization Drive in Kazakhstan"; Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*.
  22. See *Nasil'stvennaia kollektivizatsii*; Abylkhozin et al.; *Golod v Kazakhskom stepi; Noveishaia istoriia Kazakhstana*; M. K. Kozybaev, Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, Q. Aldazhumanov, *Kollektivizatsiia v Kazakhstane : tragediia krest'ianstva* (Alma-Ata: [s.n.], 1992); Zh. B. Abylkhozhin, *Strana v serdtse Evrazii: sin-zhety po istorii Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Kazak universiteti, 1998); Ibid., *Istoriia Kazakhstana: "belye piatna": sbornik statei* (Alma-Ata: "Kazakhstan", 1991). Pianciola is more closely attuned to this "statist" school while Ohayon's work tends to highlight the role of Kazakh elites, as does this article.
  23. See her seminal "Cultural Revolution as Class War" in *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*, Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 8–40 but also idem., *Stalin's Peasants; Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and *Everyday Stalinism*.
  24. See, for a good overview of Tanzanian and Ethiopian "villagization," Scott's *Seeing Like a State*, 223–261. But on other, nonsocialist settlement schemes see Lynn Robison Bailey, *The Long Walk: A History of the Navajo Wars, 1846–68* (Pasadena, CA: Westernlore Press, 1978); Philip Carl Salzman, ed., *When Nomads Settle: Process of Sedentarization as Adaptation and Response* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Rudi Matthee, "Transforming Dangerous Nomads into Useful Artisans, Technicians, Agriculturalists: Education in the Reza Shah Period," in Stephenie Cronin, *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London: Routledge, 2003).
  25. Brown, "Gridded Lives."
  26. Shayakhmetov, *The Silent Steppe*, passim.
  27. Seidekhan Nurmakhanovich Alibekov, "Agrarnoe preobrazovaniia v Kazakhstane v 20-e gody: istoricheskii opyt i uroki" (Dissertation, KazGU, Alma-Ata, 1992), 21–22.
  28. F. I. Goloshchekin, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane* (Moskva: Gos. Izdatel'stvo RSFSR, 1930), 257.
  29. Zere Makdanashevna Baigisieva, "Zemledel'cheskie i osedlie raiony Kazakhstana v usloviakh nasil'stvennogo razveryvaniia kolkhoznogo dvizheniia: Osobennosti

- i tragicheckie itogi (1929–1935 gg.),” (PhD diss., Kazakhskii gosudarstvennyi natsional’nyi universitet imeni Al’ Farabi, Almaty, 2001), 85. Such Cassandras were purged as “bourgeois wreckers.”
30. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 145–146.
  31. Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 66; Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 153–155. In the longer term, however, such colonization dominated the steppe—first of kulak families exiled from the European USSR, then deported nationalities of the period 1937–1947 and finally the “Virgin Lands” Campaign.
  32. Alibekov, “Agrarnoe preobrazovaniia,” 26.
  33. Gulnar Kendirbaeva, “‘We are Children of Alash...’ The Kazakh Intelligentsia at the Beginning of the 20th Century in Search of National Identity and Prospects of the Cultural Survival of the Kazakh People,” *Central Asian Survey* 18/1 (March 1999): 5–36.
  34. Goloshchekin, “Po dokladu kazkraikoma VKP (b),” *Rezoliutsii konferentsii, Shestaia Kazakhstanskaia kraevaia konferentsiia VKP(b)*, (Kzyl-Orda, 1925), pp. 15–23.
  35. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 3, ll. 76–80.
  36. Alibekov, 24.
  37. Baigisieva, 4.
  38. Alibekov, 22–24; Baigisieva, 3–15.
  39. *Bol’shevik Kazakhstana* 7(31) (Iul’, 1933): 61–74. Even in “settled” counties Kazakhs were collectivized in far higher numbers than Europeans. Baigisieva, 82.
  40. *KraiKK-NK RKI*, 31.
  41. *KraiKK-NK RKI*, 31.
  42. Ibid, 31.
  43. *Nasil’stvannaia kollektivizatsiia*, 14. For a detailed description of these repressive actions in only one area, among the Adaev Kazakhs of the Mangyshlak peninsula, see Mukash Omarov, *Rasstreliannaia step’: Istoriia Adeavskogo voss-taniia 1931 goda po materialam OGPU* (Almaty: Gylm, 1994).
  44. Peter Holquist, “State Violence as Technique; The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism,” in Amir Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden: Twentieth-Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 19–45.
  45. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 1, ll. 26–31; TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 1, ll. 38–49. An *artel’* owned means of production such as horses collectively but means of consumption, such as cows, by household. Communes held both in common.
  46. Soviet farms, unlike collective farms whose members were putatively stockholders in a cooperative, were agricultural “factories” whose employees were paid a wage, not a portion of the “profits.” Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 163.
  47. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 1, l. 9.
  48. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 3, ll. 1–99.
  49. *Golod v kazakhskoi stepi*, 163.
  50. See GARF, f. 6985, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 51–55.
  51. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppes,” 164.
  52. *Golod v Kazakhskom stepi*, 177.
  53. *Bol’shevik Kazakhstana*, 7(31) (Iul’ 1933): 61–74. See also Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 165–167.
  54. TsGARK, fond, 1179, d. 3, ll. 1–99.
  55. TsGARK, fond, 1179, d. 3, ll. 100–122.

56. See Gabor T. Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933–1953* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958) on the regime's poor opinion of its officials. On the fear of the regime that its officials might be unscrupulous con-men, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), particularly ch. 5. Perhaps the best study of policy implementers rather than policy formulators in a Soviet context comes from a later period, the less revolutionary 1960s. See Jerry Hough, *The Soviet Prefects: The Local Party Organs in Industrial Decision-making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).
57. For this notion Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of Saints; A Study of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).
58. TsGARK, fond, 1179, d. 3, ll. 100–122.
59. One could argue, as would Charles Tilly, that the Soviet Union was simply a weak state and its officials substituted force for resources. See Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, 990–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). I think, however, that Tilly's approach flattens out the specificity of both the Soviet and Kazakhstani examples, and more crucially, assumes a disconnect between political culture and political actions that I find problematic. I thank Matt Lenoe for bringing Tilly to my attention.
60. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 14–34.
61. For an overview of these reforms, see B. A. Tulepbayev, *Sotsialisticheskie agrarnye preobrazovaniia v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), 62–72; On conflicts, Goloshchekin, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, 78.
62. On the Semipalatinsk Affair, see Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 148–154.
63. For the Adaev "excesses," (which began once their administrative unit was disbanded) see Omarov, *Rasstrel'iannaia step'*, 13–29.
64. See Amartya Sen, *Poverties and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).
65. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 3, ll. 1–99.
66. *KraiKK-NK RKI*, 28.
67. *Golod v Kazakhskom stepi*, 160.
68. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 2, ll. 4–11.
69. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 3, ll. 1–99. See also *Bol'shevik Kazakhstana*, 7/31 (iiul' 1933): 33–45.
70. *KraiKK-NK RKI*, 31.
71. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 180.
72. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 2, ll. 4–11.
73. Pianciola has done the most careful analysis of this phenomenon to date, and he reports that Kazakh families relied on a barley and milk-products diet that mirrored the pattern of nomads in East Africa and the Sahel. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 141–144.
74. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 142.
75. TsGARK, f. 1179, d. 3, ll. 1–99.
76. Procurements later collapsed to 0.9 million quintals and 0.4 million in 1932 and 1933 during the famine. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 166.
77. G. Nurbetova, <<Krovavyi Terror: Nasil'stvennaia osedlost i kollektivizatsiia>>, *Mysl'*, 8/1999: 83–86.
78. *Nasil'stvennaia kollektivizatsiia*, 98.

79. *Noveishaia istoriia*, 240.
80. *Golod v Kazakhskom stepi*, 175–78.
81. TsGARK, f. 1179, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 26–42.
82. Pianciola, “Famine on the Steppe,” 161.
83. *Golod v Kazakhsoi stepi*, 119.
84. *Bol’shevik Kazakhstan*, 7/31 (Iul’ 1933): 61–74.
85. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 164.
86. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 170.
87. *Golod v Kazakhskom stepi*, 140–51.
88. *Ibid.*, 160.
89. *KraiKK-NK RKI*, 28–33. But see Shakaykhetov’s account of a well-run refugee camp in *The Silent Steppe*, 135–138.
90. *KraiKK-NK RKI*, 6.
91. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 181.
92. *Golod v Kazakhsoi stepi*, 145. Isaev complained that *aul* activists were in the habit of growing their hair long prior to undertaking campaigns. Long-hair was culturally coded among Kazakhs as a sign of mercilessness.
93. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 190.
94. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, 49–59.
95. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 181. The Soviet state certainly had totalitarian or, perhaps it would be better to say, totalizing aspirations but Merle Fainsod already noted nearly half a century ago that the USSR, at least in the 1930s, lacked the bureaucratic levers of power to actually impose such aspirations. See Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*, 450.
96. J. Arch Getty, “Excesses are Not Permitted: Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s,” *Russian Review*, 61/1 (Jan 2002): 113–138.
97. *Noveishaia istoriia Kazakhstana*, 261.
98. RGASPI, f. 81 (Kaganovich), op. 3, d. 419, ll. 55–57.
99. *Golod v Kazakhskom stepi*, 175–178.
100. See, for instance, the frantic reports of inundated officials in Oren’burg and Western Siberia in *Nasil’stvennaia kollektivizatsiia Kazakhstana*, 109–111, 115–118, 122–125.
101. *Golod v Kazakhskom stepi*, 175.
102. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 175.
103. *Krai KK-NK RKI*, 3.
104. *Bol’shevik Kazakhstan*, 7(31) (Iul’ 1933): 1–32.
105. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 13.
106. *Krai KK-NK RKI*, 4.
107. See especially the reports sent to the government’s Settlement Committee in TsGARK f. 1179, op. 5.
108. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 183.
109. *Krai KK-NK RKI*, 28–33.
110. *Krai KK-NK RKI*, 3–4, 28–31; For further accounts of embezzled, redirected or simply squandered food aid, see *Bol’shevik Kazakhstana*, 7(31) (Iul’ 1933): 61–74. The diversion of grain to “special” settlers is a particularly stark reminder of how low the nomads sat on the pecking order as these deported kulaks faced horrific conditions in exile. See Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, passim.
111. Pianciola, “Famine in the Steppe,” 176–7.
112. *Bol’shevik Kazakhstana*, 7(31) (Iul’ 1933): 75–81.

113. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 188–189. The concept of "soft-line" versus "hard-line" agencies' oversight of a policy representing the regime's commitment to the policy is Terry Martin's. See Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 21–22.
114. *Krai KK-NK RKI*, 33
115. Ibid.
116. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 179.
117. Ibid., 171
118. *Bol'shevik Kazakhstana*, 7(31) (Iul' 1933): 61–74.
119. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 167.
120. Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 148–151.
121. RGASPI, f. 162, d. 939.
122. Sh. Mukhamedin, <<Konfiskatsii baickikh khoziaistv v Kazakhstane>>, *Voprosy istorii*, 4/2002 (aprelia 2002): 138–142; Baigisieva reports a higher number, with the number of rural households in Kazakhstan falling from 1,218,000 to 628,000 or 590,000 from 1929 to 1935, "the greater portion of which were destroyed and perished". Baigisieva, 84.
123. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 168.
124. Valeriia Viktorovna Kozina, *Naselenie tsentral'nogo Kazakhstana (konets XIX v.—30-e gody XX v.)* (Almaty: Orkeniet, 2000), 93.
125. By September of 1932 Kazakhstan had already received over 180,000 "special settlers" (mostly deported *kulak* families). Baigisieva, 41. For Central Kazakhstan's "special settlers" see Banu Sakenovna Malybaeva, "Rost migratsii russkogo naseleniia v tsentral'nyi Kazakhstan (1926–1939 gg.)," (PhD diss., Karagandinskii gosudarstvennyi natsional'nyi universitet, Karaganda, 2002), 60–81. For the later deported nationalities, see Zh. U. Kydyralina, *Deportirovanie v Kazakhstane narody: Istoriia i sovremennost' (na materiale Atyrauskoï oblasti)* (Almaty: Ghylym, 1999), 38.
126. Pianciola, "Famine in the Steppe," 177.
127. *Noveishaia istoriia Kazakhstana*, 243–244.
128. See, for example, L. D. Kuderina, *Genotsid v Kazakhstane* (Moscow: Skorpion, 1994).

## CHAPTER 6

# COUNTERNARRATIVES OF SOVIET LIFE: KULAK SPECIAL SETTLERS IN THE FIRST PERSON

*Lynne Viola*

Beginning in the years of *perestroika* and continuing into the 1990s, beyond the fall of the Soviet Union, the survivors of dekulakization began to speak out in an outpouring of testimony. Previously almost completely silenced, the dekulakized—in particular, those who had been deported to special settlements in the early 1930s—“tore off their masks,” to use the title of Sheila Fitzpatrick’s most recent book.<sup>1</sup> By the time they were ready and able to speak, they were mainly elderly pensioners. They revealed themselves as a school of survivors who had merged, sometimes seamlessly, sometimes not, into the ranks of Soviet society, bearing the more usual identities of workers and professionals, children and parents, and veterans. The end of the Soviet Union presented them with an opportunity if not to reinvent themselves—most were far too old for that—then at least to reveal what had been hidden.

First-person narratives of dekulakization and special settlement constitute, with few exceptions, a kind of counternarrative or counterbiography to official Soviet autobiographical writing. Sheila Fitzpatrick, along with Yuri Slezkine, has written about genres of Russian/Soviet autobiographies, identifying certain stylizations, conventions, key turning points, and themes that unite writers of autobiographies according to social background and experience.<sup>2</sup> In this essay, I seek to expand upon that contribution through an exploration of autobiographical narratives presented by survivors of the special settlements. In the process, I will allow the individual survivors to tell the story of dekulakization and the special settlements in their own words, which when combined serve to create a collective counternarrative of their Soviet lives. The stories these survivors present are unique in that they tell the story of an entirely “other archipelago” of the gulag, populated by peasants; in this respect, they supplement the already very rich picture of the



concentration camps that has been available in memoirs written by members of the intelligentsia.

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Collectivization was a watershed in the memories of the dekulakized. Sheila Fitzpatrick has observed the “binary scheme of ‘old life’ and ‘new life,’ ‘then’ and now,” in Soviet autobiographical writing.<sup>3</sup> In the memory of the survivors of dekulakization, collectivization represented the pivot of the binary, a drastic and irreversible break in the lives of its victims. The nightmarish suddenness of the experience was in sharp contrast to what in peasant memory seemed the idyll of country life before the Deluge. Survivors framed their memories in a pastoral of idealized childhood.

A.M. Cherkasova, nine at the time of her family’s dekulakization, prefaced her memories of special resettlement with a fond description of her village. “My native village is Prosiyani . . . In the middle of the village, there was a white church with gilded cupolas, surrounded by a wrought-iron fence; next to it was the school and the square where they would set up a carousel on important holidays. From the square to all sides ran streets and lanes, white huts sitting amidst green gardens.”<sup>4</sup> I. D. Ivanov shared his memories of life before dekulakization: “I was eight years old in 1929 and I remember well our village Sergeevka . . . The village had just one street, stretching east to west. The street was one-sided. On that side were the houses and below were wells, ponds, streams, bathhouses, and gardens. Behind the houses were the yards, sheds, threshing barns, threshing floors, and of course the fields . . . Life in the countryside was gay, joyful, collective even though labor began from earliest childhood.”<sup>5</sup>

Memories of the beauty and peace of the village vied with memories of family labor. Cherkasova wrote, “I was born in 1921 into a large peasant family: grandfather and grandmother, father, mother, six aunts, and we five children. The family was friendly and hardworking. In winter we spun, weaved, in summer we worked in the fields. Father was not only a good farmer, but a tailor, [he] sewed sheepskin coats, overcoats from homespun cloth. [I] don’t remember there ever being quarrels in our family, but [I] remember how beautifully [they] sang, while [my] older brother played the balalaika.”<sup>6</sup> E. I. Novoselova was also from a large family and remembered rising at three in the morning in busy season and working until nine at night: “It was hard, of course, peasant work isn’t easy, but we were raised on this, [our] parents taught us from our earliest years to be accustomed to labor . . .”<sup>7</sup>

Although peasant life and labor in ordinary times were never quite as idyllic as these (then) child survivors remembered, the brutality and senselessness of dekulakization served to create an impression of rupture in memory as the peasant world was turned upside down. Dekulakization altered these peasant lives forever, serving as the pivot of before and after in special settler counternarratives.

Between “before and after” in the counternarratives, there is the actual experience of dekulakization: expropriation and expulsion from home

and village, temporary warehousing en route to the special settlements, and the transport. These experiences served as an important transitional phase, preparing peasants to become special settlers. As counternarrative, this stage of experience was tantamount to the crisis that prefaced the birth of a new consciousness in the “new Soviet man/woman.” The new consciousness in this case, however, was that of enemy, kulak, and special settler.

The searing pain of the times reverberates in the memory of survivors. N. N. Pavlov was exiled from Belorussia to the Urals as a child. He recalled: “One morning all the villages of the Belorussian woodlands looked like a stirred-up anthill. All the residents, from the smallest to the biggest, gathered at our hut to see [us] off to an unknown destination; many wailed, keened, cried. That morning, father, mother, and we two little brothers got ready to be exiled as kulaks . . . We were only allowed to bring the clothes on our backs and a small supply of food.

“They put the four of us, dressed in homespun clothes and lapti [bast shoes], on a cart with two armed policemen [*militisionery*] for our guards. And just like that we left. Everyone made a fuss, cried for us along the way. The cart set off and a crowd of villagers accompanied us far beyond the [village’s] outskirts.

“Indelible in my memory is our beloved Sharik running behind us . . . The dog was gray with floppy ears. [She] followed us for a long time, sometimes running ahead, wagging her tail, looking at us pitifully. With her dog’s heart, she felt a terrible calamity for us. We felt our own helplessness just like she did.”<sup>8</sup>

Following the shock of expropriation and expulsion from the village, the experience of the collection points (where kulak families from various villages were gathered to await deportation), temporary settlement, and transport to the hinterlands of the far north and east forms the next discrete episodes in the lives of the dekulakized, representing a kind of ride through Hades en route to a new world.

Cherkasova recalled being packed into a cart and brought to the collection point. She wrote: “There on the square everyone moaned and cried. All around us was a guard, [they even] led us to the toilet under convoy.”<sup>9</sup> Victor M. remembered arriving at the district center and being herded into a large hall with a crowd of families and a din of noise.<sup>10</sup> Pavlov remembered meeting up with other groups of exiles along the way to the collection points. “We began to get to know each other, where people were from.” His family was taken to the station at Ratmirovich. “There they began to call us *spets-pereselentsy* (special settlers)”<sup>11</sup>

Mariia Fedorovna Abramenko, exiled to Naryn from Ukraine, remembered the housing where the special settler families (minus the menfolk who were sent directly into the interior) were warehoused until weather conditions permitted their transport further north. She recalled, “[They] took us to Siberia in winter in a freight car, unloaded us at the station Iaia, and threw us into a large barracks with bunk beds. The floor was covered with damp sawdust, [there were] strong drafts, [one] could hardly breathe.

Children and old people began to die . . . [They] piled the corpses in stacks, then took them away on horses and buried them somewhere. In our family, there were six children, three died. In April, [they] took all the exiles to Tomsk.”<sup>12</sup>

Transporting the displaced began in the early summer. Conditions were terrible. Victor M. recalled traveling into exile in a freezing cattle car, built with wide wooden planks that let the wind in. The train car had a “*bur-zhuika*” stove, but it provided little warmth.<sup>13</sup> Pavlov remembered the experience of the transport in great detail. The train car in which he and his family found themselves had two rows of double bunks. The window was covered with bars and was kept closed in the day time, especially near big towns. The car was full beyond capacity, forcing people to squeeze in to find room on the narrow bunks. The door to the car was bolted and, before departing, Pavlov spied armed guards on the platform through a crack in the door. When the train started, many began to cry again, lamenting the fate of their lost homes and farms. The train’s occupants received pails of water at the larger stations and sometimes bread and a watery soup. The latrine in Pavlov’s car consisted of a bucket, screened off by a make-shift bast grille, most likely supplied by one of the travelers. The latrine bucket was emptied out at stops, leaving the car’s atmosphere stuffy and oppressive at most times. F. A. Rodin, who was five or six at the time of the transport, recalled people holding up curtains of clothes around the latrine bucket in an awkward attempt at privacy.<sup>14</sup>

The first days of exile marked the next great stage in the survivors’ memories. Upon arrival, they opened their eyes to a new world, not the standard Soviet world of possibilities and happiness but a new world of the impossible and the tragic. Irina Fedoseevna Korostelkina, who was deported to Naryn from Altai in 1930, recalled, “we were put on an open barge, packed in like sardines in a tin, for a month. It rained frequently, pouring above with nowhere for cover. From time to time, we approached the shore, [and] a part of the people were unloaded and then we went on again further north.” Irina and her family were soon left off in the middle of a forest. “We were surrounded by taiga, as I now recall. Mama said, ‘Look children—there’s a hole in the sky.’ But we didn’t understand and asked her, ‘Where is the hole?’ In the first months, hundreds of children and old people died. I remember everything—I was nine-years old then.”<sup>15</sup>

Life in the special settlements constituted a shadow world, an alternate, grim reality to that portrayed in the autobiographies of Soviet success stories. Once in the special settlements, the rhythm of the narratives’ movement comes to a virtual halt. Life in the special settlements foreclosed past and future, offering a relentless present. Memory fixed itself upon subjects that defined existence: labor, commandants, hunger, death, and fear. The family served as backdrop for all experience and the figure of the mother embodied the sacrifice and tragedy of the special settlements.

Labor played a central role in the reality of the special settlements, but it was not the “life-giving” labor of the socialist collective, but rather the

forced labor of the gulag, agonizing labor under brutal conditions. "Everyone worked," recalled T. I. Evseeva, who was exiled as a nine-year-old with her family to the Perm region. "The first months we lived in a *shalash*. After several days, they sent us to work. We walked eight kilometers to clear taiga to plough fields. Everyone had to work: both men and women, even children and old people worked in felling trees . . . . Despite the hard work, they fed us poorly. We were hungry from the first months. Bread, rationed, was never enough."<sup>16</sup> Viktor M., who was thirteen at the time, remembered working in the construction of the special settlements alongside the adult men.<sup>17</sup> Pavlov, whom we met earlier, also worked in construction, as a carpenter, and he remembered that he "worked a lot" for "ahead of us lay winter."<sup>18</sup> A. K. Rodionova, a special settler in Siberia, recalled that she would be "up at 4 and to work at 6. The plan was 3 cubic meters of wood. If you didn't fulfill it, you didn't go home—they wouldn't give you your rations."<sup>19</sup>

I.S. Olifier wrote, "I remember that when the women were working and began to cry and the tears began pouring out, [they] would sing one of the couplets from the 30's exile years: 'Sick of cold barracks, sick of bed bugs, sick of working in the Urals' forests.'" This was one of Olifier's childhood memories from his early life as a special settler in the Urals. He recalled his mother's suffering at work: "At the time [1933], she [Olifier's mother] worked in the forest collecting pine resin. In one hand [she] carried a pail into the taiga, in the other was a wooden stick—a scraper, and so [she worked] from early morning until late at night. All day she walked from pine tree to pine tree, never attaining the 12 kilogram norm. The resin ate at her hands, face, hair. Even teenagers worked. Only in individual cases of weak, sick, emaciated men, women, youth were they freed from work in the collection of sap, from work in the timber harvest, and transferred to light work—removing tree trunks, cutting wood . . . ."<sup>20</sup> Olifier was twelve years old and he watched as his mother and the other women worked day and night while the special settlement's commandant stalked the village on horseback, with a whip in hand.<sup>21</sup>

The commandants, who reigned over the special villages, were the equivalents—in a reverse mirror reflection—of the Communist mentors in conventional Soviet biography who helped socialist laborers along the way to consciousness. They naturally held a special place in the memory of the special settlers. The commandants *were* Soviet power, representatives of an all-powerful state that controlled all aspects of the special settlers' lives. F. A. Rodin's memory of his commandant, one Kitaev, was of a man who "always wore leather boots and carried a lash in his hands."<sup>22</sup> Evgeniia Alekseevna Griaznova remembered her commandant as "very, very strict." His name was Petr Petrovich Pystin and the children made up a secret tongue twister around his alliterative name.<sup>23</sup> L. I. Ermolina remembered that the commandant's word was the law for the youth of her special settlement. "The commandant decided where we could go to study after finishing school [in the special settlement]. Those who were good and disciplined could leave for Tiumen or Tobol'sk to study; those who were truant or had been in

trouble in general could not go on to study. The commandant registered marriages—he himself decided whether or not to let you get married.”<sup>24</sup>

Gerbert Emmanuilovich, an ethnically German “kulak” special settler, recalled, “We had different commandants. The first, from Chernysh, Andrei Alekseevich Ul’ianov, mocked us, threatened us with his pistol. Once he tied an old man to a post. For such arbitrariness, he was tried [in court].” He continued, “another, also a Chernysh muzhik, Ivan Andreevich Serditov, was kind, merry. We respected him. He loved to say, ‘When the boss comes, the worker should take a break.’”<sup>25</sup> Gerbert Emmanuilovich was not alone in having mixed memories of his commandants. Ivan Tvardovskii, brother of the poet and later editor of *Novyi mir*, Aleksandr, wrote that his commandant was a young, kind man, but noted all the same that they were not allowed to address him as “comrade.”<sup>26</sup> Ekaterina Sergeevna Lukina, exiled to Naryn from Krasnoarsk, remembered, “The commandant called us ‘sibulontsami’... The settlement was called Mogil’nyi, but when the commandant Smirnov came, he renamed it Smirnovka.” She continued, “When Nikitin became commandant instead of Smirnov, it became easier to live. He was compassionate to people. [He] let us go 8 kilometers to a village where we could exchange goods for food... he renamed the settlement Novyi Vasiugin. But by this time, scarcely half of the exiles remained—Novyi Vasiugin stood on bones.”<sup>27</sup>

“The commandant’s power was unlimited in the taiga conditions of those times,” recalled Olifier, who had been exiled to the Urals as a child.<sup>28</sup> Like the other children, Olifier remembered the commandant as the supreme authority. His word was law and could determine whether people lived or died. But while most of these former special settlers retained childhood memories of the external trappings of the commandants’ power—military bearing, horses, whips, brutish behavior, and so on—Olifier was correct in his adult conclusions of the “taiga conditions” that allowed the commandant virtually unlimited powers. No doubt this was a reflection that came later. The child’s eye, which dominates the narratives, instead dwelled on the external trappings of power and the immediate impact of that power.

Hunger was another constant in the memories of the special settlers, one that formed a kind of leit motif in their memories. Olifier wrote eloquently: “Hunger—this is not only a feverish dream about food, but a brutal nightmare of fear.”<sup>29</sup> Pavlov remembered those days as hungry times: “For food, they gave out only 200 to 300 grams of bread for adults and 100 grams for nonworkers. There was no other food. In the summer, we ate mushrooms and other gifts of nature. My littler brother and I managed to catch fish and this helped to improve our beggarly existence for awhile.”<sup>30</sup>

The memory of hunger remained sharp and often paramount in the minds of those who experienced special resettlement as children. Memories of hunger were most vivid for the early days of settlement and particularly the famine of 1932–33, which hit the places of special resettlement hard. Lukina recalled, “[they] gave us meager rations .... [They] gave us six kilograms of flour a month.... We were weak.... People began to swell and die.

[They] buried them without coffins, in fraternal graves which grew every day... [The commandant] was very brutal, when [they] divided the rations, some, swollen from hunger, shoved in their mouths pieces of moldy bread and they were beaten. Soon they died. Only those who could work got rations, the rest were doomed.”<sup>31</sup>

A. S. Nagdaseva, who was exiled to the Urals, recalled the hunger and the rations that saved her life when she began to work. “Especially difficult were the years 1932 and 1933. Hunger, cold in the barracks. Bread and other products were rationed—in a miserly fashion. Mama cut up the bread into little squares, [we also had] barley kasha and soup with nettles.... My sister slept more and more. My mother talked and cried—‘she’ll die from hunger’.... Illnesses began, especially typhus. There was even a typhus barracks. People went there either swollen or emaciated. Many died. I remember well a conversation mama had with a neighbor: ‘Today [they] took away 14 corpses.’ The little ones died most... From the summer of 1933 I began to work, we as teens worked from May to 1 October for bread rations or for a meal at work....”<sup>32</sup>

Veniamin Makarovitch Kurchenkov, exiled as a child from Altai to Naryn, recalled his experience as an orphan. He remembered when the “mass death” of the famine began. He wrote, “In the majority of families, there were many children and the horrible suffering cut down the children first. The mothers suffered no less, not being in any condition to save their children. Whole families died out. In the settlements Gorodetsk, Palochka, Suiga, and Protochka, from seven thousand, eight hundred exiles only two thousand remained living after two years.” He continued, “From the eleven in our family, seven died in one and a half years. In the orphanage where I lived, there were about two hundred children, all orphaned children of ‘kulaks.’ In each room of the orphanage hung the slogan, ‘Thank you, beloved Stalin, for our happy childhood.’ There weren’t any miracles in the life of the children for which they should be grateful to the *vozhd*,’ especially since he ‘made them happy’ by leaving them without fathers and mothers.”<sup>33</sup>

The terror followed the famine in the counternarratives of some special settlers. They would be caught up in mass operation 00447, which targeted former kulaks said to retain their hostile ways (among others). If the fight against the enemies of Soviet power figured importantly in some conventional Soviet autobiographies, then the special settlers wrote with the clear knowledge that they were deemed to be the enemies. Nineteen thirty-seven served as another landmark of sorts in the memories of many special settlers as they saw their fathers taken away.

“My parents were peasants, both illiterate, [they] couldn’t even sign their own names... [They] took my father away in 1937 as an enemy of the people. He was a tireless laborer, knew only his family and work. In childhood, [he] had been an orphan, in his whole life he never hurt a soul. How was he an enemy? To whom?” This is how Lukina, her parents’ only child, remembered 1937.<sup>34</sup> Cherkasova, who was exiled to the Urals as a child, wrote, “And

then 1937 passed through our settlement... Late at night... the GPU came, searched, and took away father. In the morning, we found out that they had taken many. They held the arrested under guard at the school... We didn't see father again."<sup>35</sup> In polar Igarka, former special settlers remembered the "raids" of 1937 and 1938, when they took away the fathers. One of the Chernousov sisters eventually managed to track down her father in the camps, where, she said, he had turned into a "walking skeleton."<sup>36</sup>

O. Burova, who had been exiled to the Urals in 1930, remembered when they came for her father. "On 25 August 1937, the day of the arrest, father left to work the night shift. That day we had cut wood together. He was sad when he left and embraced the children. I was awakened that night by the sound of footsteps. Several people walked down our long corridor. They knocked on our door. A guard led father in... The search began. They sat father at a distance [from us] and did not allow him to speak. Mama sat with my youngest sister on her knee. They didn't find anything. They told my father, 'gather your things.' Father turned around at the door and said, 'Children, I am guilty of nothing.' My sister cried and mama stood stone-faced." Burova's father was put in the Kirovsk prison, where he was allowed to receive packages and even several visits from his wife. After that he disappeared and Burova, who was 14 at the time, found out that he had been sentenced to ten years without the right to correspond. "I wrote in those years to Stalin and Beria, asking about my father. In 1943, an NKVD worker-acquaintance told me not to write—otherwise I'd end up with my father."<sup>37</sup>

Fear continued well beyond the terror. The Soviet patriotism of standard autobiographies was distorted into echoes of fear and stigma in the first-hand accounts of these survivors. "I was afraid whenever I saw a policemen, because it seemed to me that they could tell that something about me wasn't right... When Stalin died, I was working in a military organization. And I remember that they immediately called a meeting of our section and announced his death. When I heard the news, I got very frightened, thinking that they would be able to tell from the expression on my face that I was very happy... And I forced myself to look sad, so they wouldn't notice that it didn't upset me."<sup>38</sup> "When I retired on pension, I became absolutely free... It is really terrible to live under the weight of fear..."<sup>39</sup> "As long as Yeltsin has not signed the laws, I'm not going to tell anyone I was dekulakized... Before perestroika, I had not even told my son..."<sup>40</sup>

These are voices of fear—fear of discovery, fear of officialdom. The three women quoted above, all elderly at the time of their interviews, had grown up with the stigma of the kulak label, an identity that was central to their existence yet completely hidden. Elena Trofimovna Dolgikh who lived her life "under the weight of fear" had been the adopted daughter of rural school teachers. Her grandfather was dekulakized and she herself was denounced as a "daughter of kulaks" while in teachers college. Later she lost her position as a village teacher when she was again denounced. She continued to

suffer discrimination, even experiencing a suitor's rejection as a result of the revelation of her class background.<sup>41</sup>

Although fear and stigma never leaves most of the first-person accounts, there is a point at which counternarrative ceased to be "counter" and shares important aspects of the standard Soviet autobiography. This is the point at which former special settlers talk about school and education. Education held the same meaning for them, perhaps even more so, as it did for the average Soviet young person striving to better himself or herself in an age of all possibilities. The special settlers, however, knew that the future was not one of all possibilities, but rather more limited chances. Education represented a way-out of the special settlements.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it becomes apparent from reading letters of the times that it also represented an intrinsic value of immense importance to these young people who continually quoted Lenin ("study, study, study") in letters to authorities, petitioning to be allowed to leave the settlements for study.<sup>43</sup>

Valentina Timofeevna Slipchenko, born into a Ukrainian-speaking family in 1921 in Poltava and exiled to the Urals in 1930, remembered how, "with joy, [I] ran to school. There was an enormous stove there. One could warm up.... They gave me bread.... Here was happiness for me. Did I learn? I lived there. [I] sat in the last row, listened, understood nothing. Everyone spoke in Russian and I did not understand. I could barely write and didn't know how to count. No one reproved me, no one chased me out. I didn't talk to anyone. Everyone played during the break—I [sat] in a corner. How to play? About what to talk? I didn't understand much and nothing came into my head. What I saw and lived, that is what I learned."<sup>44</sup>

Klavdia Petrovna Chudinova, who was exiled as a child from Voronezh to Komi, wrote, "All the special settler children strove for an education, many received middle and higher education. And from them were produced good specialists: teachers, medics, agricultural and forestry workers, and others. The adults themselves served as models for their children. From their earliest years, [they] had been accustomed to labor and honesty. Among the special settlers, there were no shirkers or homeless; they were all excellent laborers."<sup>45</sup> Echoes of Klavdia Petrovna's considered opinion reverberate in the memories of other special settlers who lived into the 1980s and 1990s to look back upon their experience of exile. School held a special place in these survivors' memories. Many recalled their teachers fondly, remembering them as devoted and selfless.<sup>46</sup> The school itself was an escape, a warm corner amidst the cold, and a place of hope. Above all, school represented possibilities—for a normal life, for a future.

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From the late 1930s, the memories of the special settlers begin to thin out with surprisingly little about the war, somewhat more about education and jobs outside the special settlements, and long periods of quiet during the



decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s when undoubtedly they were preoccupied with families and an entirely different kind of survival. The long period of silence, of course, was predetermined by official censorship, fear, and stigma. It could be that these survivors, like many Holocaust survivors in the 1950s, were neither ready nor able to tell their stories at this point. We cannot know the exact reason for the silence in the case of the special settlers because fear and official censorship precluded the possibility of testimony, often even within the family context. It is also likely that many former special settlers merged more or less seamlessly into Soviet life, allowing the present to submerge the past.

The special settlers did not begin to discuss their experiences until the 1990s, when they could be sure that it was safe to reveal what had formerly been a hidden part of their identity. Their testimony was for themselves, for their children, and for history. They bore witness to the experience of dekulakization and deportation, in the process constructing a kind of collective narrative of their experience, their version of Soviet life.

Their memories were filtered by time and, most especially, by a memory set in childhood. The child's eye of their memories precluded the possibility that these stories would not be, to some extent, personal, centered within the family. The child's eye also often featured a preoccupation with the visual and the external, as in the case of descriptions of the precollectivization village and the commandants. Likewise, there is much that is left out of these accounts: we see little of the actual labor or administrative regimes of the settlements, more of the mothers than the fathers (who were often away from the villages at work), little on actual interactions with power, and, naturally, nothing from those who shed their pasts and became Soviet in the more traditional sense.

Almost all of the special settlers who testified had long left the countryside. Many were retired professionals—teachers, doctors, veterinarians—who had been trained originally to serve in the special settlements but who left for the cities over time. As such, it is obvious why education played such a central role in their recollections. And, of course, this is not surprising given the role of education in Soviet society and the transformative role it played within the context of what Fitzpatrick has described as an “affirmative action” regime, featuring high rates of social mobility.<sup>47</sup> It should also be noted that many more women than men wrote—perhaps because of the reality of gender demographics, perhaps because women are more likely to tell their tales.

The testimony of the survivors of dekulakization and the special settlements formed part of the counternarrative in the 1990s that sought to upturn the earlier standard Soviet success story. They were written, at least to a certain extent, as “victim testimony,”<sup>48</sup> though many of these individuals ceased to be victims through their own efforts and their ability to assume, when necessary, a more standard Soviet identity. Their stories are a separate category from those of the intelligentsia camp survivors with whom we are more familiar, in part because of the social origins of the writers, in part

because there was no "secret speech" for this category of victims. The party intellectuals of the class of '37, moreover, wrote highly politicized memoirs, quite naturally. Although there are the occasional critical comments about Stalin or the Soviet Union in the testimony of the special settlers, it does not amount to political critique per se as much as simple and compelling evidence for the development of such a critique.

The stories of the special settlers represent a different reality and lived experience within Soviet socialism. This is not to say that these stories in any way cancel out the conventional Soviet narratives which had their own reality. Instead, they complement them, revealing another aspect of the multifaceted sides of Soviet society and Soviet identity. In this sense, their story is further evidence of the complexities of Soviet history, reinforcing what has perhaps been Fitzpatrick's most important contribution to the U.S. historiography on the Soviet Union: demonstrating the failings of cold war historiographical orthodoxies with their view of the Soviet Union as a monolithic, homogeneous, unitary entity expressed ideologically in the utopian right-wing fantasy of totalitarianism and opening up the field to professional, rigorous analytical and empirical treatments of Soviet history.

## NOTES

1. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
2. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine, eds., *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War*, trans. Yuri Slezkine (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 3–17, 18–30.
3. Ibid., p. 16. Yuri Slezkine has described a similar phenomenon in his discussion of emigre memoirs, noting the importance of the revolution and civil war as great divides in the life memories of the emigres he discusses (Ibid., pp. 18–19).
4. V. A. Kozlov, et al., eds., *Neizvestnaia Rossiia. XX vek. Arkhivy, pis'ma, memuary* (Moscow, 1992), vol. 1, p. 214.
5. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 198–199.
6. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 214.
7. *Zabveniiu ne podlezhit. Neizvestnye stranitsy Nizhegorodskoi istorii* (Nizhnyi Novgorod, 1994).
8. T. I. Slavko, ed., *Kulatskaia ssylka na Urale, 1930–1936* (Moscow, 1995), pp. 153–157.
9. Kozlov et al., eds., *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, vol. 1, pp. 214–216.
10. Olga Litinenko and James Riordan, eds., *Memories of the Dispossessed: Descendants of Kulak Families Tell Their Stories* (Nottingham, UK: Bramcote Press, 1998), p. 40.
11. Slavko, ed., *Kulatskaia ssylka na Urale*, p. 154.
12. V. N. Maksheev, ed., *Narymskaia khronika, 1930–1945: Tragediia spetspereselentsev. Dokumenty i vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1997), pp. 34–35.
13. Litinenko and Riordan, eds., *Memories of the Dispossessed*, p. 41. A *burzhuika* was a small, jerry-rigged stove.
14. V. M. Kirillova, ed., *Kniga pamiati. Posviashchaetsia Tagil'chanam—zbertvam repressii* (Ekaterinburg, 1994), pp. 134–141.

15. Maksheev, ed., *Narymskaia khronika*, pp. 18–19.
16. *Zabveniiu ne podlezhit*, pp. 236–237.
17. Litinenko and Riordan, eds., *Memories of the Dispossessed*, pp. 43–45.
18. Slavko, ed., *Kulatskaia sylka na Urale*, pp. 155–156.
19. V. M. Samosudov and L. V. Rachev, *Sud'by liudskie* (Omsk, 1998), p. 140.
20. Slavko, *Kulatskaia sylka na Urale*, pp. 151–153.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
22. Kirillova, ed., *Kniga pamiati*, p. 136. For a similar description of a commandant with lash always in hand, see Slavko, ed., *Kulatskaia sylka na Urale*, p. 152.
23. G. F. Dobronozhenko and L. S. Shabalova, eds., *Pokaianie, Komi republikanskii martirolog zhertv massovykh politicheskikh repressii* (Syktyvkar, 2001), vol. 4 (1), p. 717.
24. Samosudov and Rachev, *Sud'by liudskie*, p. 141.
25. Dobronozhenko and Shabalova, eds., *Pokaianie*, vol 4 (2), p. 303.
26. Ivan Tvardovskii, "Stranitsy perezhitogo," *Iunost'*, no. 3 (1988), p. 17.
27. Maksheev, ed., *Narymskaia khronika*, pp. 36–37. (SIBULON stands for Sibirskoe upravlenie lagerei osobogo naznacheniiia, or the Siberian Administration of Camps of Special Designation. "Sibulontsy" refers to its inmates.)
28. Slavko, ed., *Kulatskaia sylka na Urale*, p. 151.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
31. Maksheev, *Narymskaia khronika*, pp. 36–37.
32. Slavko, *Kulatskaia sylka na Urale*, pp. 161–164.
33. Maksheev, *Narymskaia khronika*, pp. 43–44.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.
35. Kozlov et al., eds., *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, vol. 1, pp. 214–216.
36. *And the Past Seems But a Dream*. (Sverdlovsk, 1987), a film based on the stories of the children of Igarki.
37. *Kotlovan (Khibinskoe obshchestvo "Memorial")*, March 1991, p. 8. (My thanks to Kathleen Smith for very kindly sharing this source with me.)
38. Barbara Alpern Engel and Anastasia Posadskaya-Vanderbeck, eds., *A Revolution of their Own* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 31, 35.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 158–159.
40. Litinenko and Riordan, eds., *Memories of the Dispossessed*, pp. 62–63.
41. Engel and Posadskaya-Vanderbeck, eds., *A Revolution of their Own*, pp. 157–159.
42. By 1938, special settler children upon reaching the age of 16 could leave their place of exile in order to work or continue their education. They received passports with resident restrictions.
43. See Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), chap. 9.
44. Kirillova, ed. *Kniga pamiati*, pp. 118–134.
45. Dobronozhenko and Shabalova, eds., *Pokaianie*, vol. 4 (1), p. 729. (Klavdia Petrovna, anachronistically used the word *bomzhi* for what I have translated as "homeless," an anachronism from the vocabulary of the 1990s).
46. *And the Past Seems But a Dream*; and Dobronozhenko and Shabalova, eds., *Pokaianie*, vol. 4 (1), p. 715.
47. This is the argument developed in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Although my undergraduate lecture notes from one of Sheila

Fitzpatrick's Columbia University courses, circa 1977 (!), include this phrase, I have not tracked it down in her published works.

48. The testimony comes from several different sources. Some is contained in memoirs, most short essays. Many of these essays came as a result of solicitations in periodicals published by local branches of Memorial or as a result of a new breed of archivist and historian (at times the children of survivors) tracking them down. Others were published as interviews conducted by "advocates" of uncovering the past, or a certain past, and contain almost no details about the interviewing process.

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## CHAPTER 7

# GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND REPRODUCTION IN THE POSTWAR SOVIET UNION

*Mie Nakachi*

### *A Female Perspective*

*During the Great Patriotic War, many women lost husbands. These wives like most young women, sincerely wish to found a family, to have a husband and father for their children. However, they cannot realize their wishes because of the significant numerical superiority of the female population and unwillingness of some men to take on the burden of having a genuine (nastoiashchii) family. . . Among [single mothers,] of course, there are many women who became mothers due to the false promises made by men about a future life together.<sup>1</sup>*

### *A Male Perspective*

*Have you not heard of the Law of July 8, 1944? According to Article 29 of KZOPS, since the child was born in an unregistered marriage, I owe nothing to you or your child. Extricate yourself as you wish (Kak khotite, vykruchivaites'). You are now an adult. Noone asked you to bear children. Our socialist fatherland (otechestvo) will direct and raise the boy in the Communist spirit.<sup>2</sup>*

In her comparative study of women's letter writing practices during the prewar and postwar periods, Sheila Fitzpatrick has noted a great change in the way wives wrote about their husbands. Whereas many women in the 1930s played the role of loyal wife and wrote letters to the authorities in defense of their arrested husbands, postwar women denounced their husbands for their extramarital relationships, expressing anger and resentment. She argues persuasively that in the postwar period, there was a notable "feeling of a real 'battle of the sexes' going on, with a level of hostility between men and women not seen in the prewar period."<sup>3</sup>

This battle of the sexes was caused by the devastating war and postwar demographic politics. Toward the end of the war, Soviet leaders adopted a pronatalist policy drafted and recommended by N. S. Khrushchev. Given the extremely unbalanced sex ratio, Khrushchev thought that accelerated population growth would be possible only if men were given incentive to impregnate women other than their wives, and if unmarried and widowed women

were given sufficient support to raise out-of-wedlock children. For men, the necessary incentive was identified as a release from financial responsibility for their post-1944 out-of-wedlock children. For highly fertile women, significantly increased financial support would be provided. As for single mothers, new aid would be provided at the same monetary level as the prewar child support payment. Unwed mothers also had the "right" to leave their children in state-run orphanages.

In line with these pronatalist financial measures, the 1944 Family Law altered birth registration regulations, recognizing only registered marriage and severing all ties between fathers and their out-of-wedlock offspring. Increased taxes on small families were levied to pay for additional state orphanages.<sup>4</sup> Divorce was made both more difficult and more expensive. The married should remain so, making for a firm identity marker, separating them from the unwed and their illegitimate offspring.

The 1944 Family Law would become unpopular among many Soviet women. Not surprisingly, unmarried mothers deplored the fact that their out-of-wedlock children had a blank for father's name on their birth certificates. Despite their post-1944 legal identity as unmarried, they would continue to speak of "marriage," "husband," and "wife" in accordance with the 1926 Family Law. This practice at least psychologically legitimated themselves and their children. Although initially this law's dangers for legally married women might not have been obvious, they would also soon complain that the 1944 law made it easy for their husbands to develop extramarital relationships. In contrast, generally speaking, men were more willing to accept the new definition of legal marriage. It allowed them to come to terms with their own personal "postwar realities," legitimizing wartime and early postwar relationships. The gap between women's and men's perceptions about their marriage status led to anger, resentment, and suffering among betrayed women. Marriage became unstable, and abortions shot up, negatively affecting the long-term reproductive health of Soviet women.

Works on the prewar Soviet period have shown that family/marital identity was extremely important for the politics of class and citizenship. Sheila Fitzpatrick has shown that class became an ascribed category in postrevolutionary Russia, and family identity, meaning "origins," was an important component in ascribing class.<sup>5</sup> Golfo Alexopoulos's study of disenfranchisement, the traumatic consequence for millions of Soviet citizens of association with a "wrong" class, demonstrates that family members of the disenfranchised sometimes divorced or publicly announced their separation from the arrested or deported. In the late 1930s, such strategies were particularly necessary.<sup>6</sup> In the prewar context, whether you had a "correct" family/marriage or not was the central issue of family identity. In the postwar period, where annually between 14 and 20 percent of births were out-of-wedlock, whether you had a husband or father also became a component of identity with serious economic, social, psychological, and health repercussions. Gender analysis suggests the creation of a new group of underprivileged single mothers and illegitimate children, carrying the "stigmata" of the 1944 Family Law.

Marital identity would become an indicator of the postwar shift in gender relations within Soviet society.

This essay examines how the Soviet Union's attempt to accelerate fertility growth failed because the kind of gender relationship promoted by the law was not widely accepted among women as ideal for raising a child. I argue that, ironically, the policy widened the gap between men's and women's marital interests and had detrimental effects on strong family and high fertility, the very goals of pronatalism. In this sense, postwar Soviet pronatalist policy was a failure. In the following I first discuss the mass transformation of families and marriages during World War II, analyzing wartime demography's influence on gender relations. A discussion of the 1944 Family Law and its vision of the fertile gender relationship will follow, showing how male-centered perspectives dominated in the formation of postwar population policy. Consequently, the diverging marital interests between women and men suggest destabilized marriages, despite the low divorce rate recorded officially. In conclusion, I will argue that unstable gender relations became one of the key underlying causes for rapidly increasing abortions in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

## WORLD WAR II: DESTROYED FAMILIES AND NEW "MARRIAGES"

Dramatic demographic changes began as the June 1941 German attack triggered Soviet mass mobilization to and evacuation away from the front. For the entire period of the war, 34 million men and 0.6 million women were mobilized.<sup>7</sup> These numbers include those who worked as military administrators and those in training, so not all left immediately. Nevertheless, most were relocated to the front, military bases, and production units, leaving their families behind. The process of family break-up was also accelerated by evacuation. Those who lived close to the western border of the Soviet Union were evacuated to Siberia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, totaling approximately 17.5 million.<sup>8</sup> In the midst of such demographic turmoil, many families were separated and lost contact with each other. In German-occupied areas, able-bodied men and women were taken away as forced labor, leaving their families to the whims of fate. Communications across the ever-shifting front between Red Army men and their families in enemy-occupied territories was not only difficult, but also treasonous. The war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany tore tens of millions of families apart. The national cataclysm left few unaffected.

This raging whirlpool of demographic change also produced new unions, which were often considered as "marriages." Since the 1926 Family Law recognized *de facto* marriage, during the war, romantic liaisons could indeed have legal meaning. Especially cohabitation of any length could be called a "marriage," at least by a woman, particularly if it involved a child-birth. In this case, the man was almost certainly registered as the father of the child by the mother. The same relationship could be perceived as



temporary and casual by the man, but the evidence that a woman and man referred to each other as “husband” and “wife” in public could serve as legal evidence of marriage.<sup>9</sup> If the relationship did not result in childbirth, both parties might part, calling it just a temporary love, moving on to a next “marriage.”<sup>10</sup>

Many young men got “married” before leaving for the front. In the army, there were sexual unions between male soldiers and female soldiers/medical personnel. Male soldiers sometimes met local women where they were temporarily stationed and established new “families.” During evacuations, women and men met on the road and united. Women who were left in German-occupied areas sometimes “married” German soldiers. Women waiting on the homefront sometimes were wrongly informed of their husbands’ deaths, and “remarried.” In desperate times, joint efforts promised better survival chances and some solace from desolation and sorrow. But the wheel of war and fate ground most hopes of permanence to dust.

Thus, wartime society was filled with dislocated people and offered optimal conditions for new unions. Toward the end of the war, these liaisons can be categorized into two patterns: one which involved women in the military and the other, civilian women. Unions and meetings that involved women in the military took place primarily within the military. Because the Soviet Army and Navy enlisted many young women in their late teens and early twenties primarily as medical staff, many sexual unions and “marriages” were formed, significant enough for the government to issue related decrees and orders in 1942, regarding state aid for pregnant women who worked in the military both as civilians and service women.<sup>11</sup> Exposed to the extreme conditions at the front, young women surrounded by men often fell in love with male soldiers.

When mutual, such attractions quickly metamorphosed into unions, often casually, but almost universally described as “marriage (*brak*).” Happy marriages were brief in duration, often under pain of death. But there were exceptions. For example, Svetlana N. Liubich knew a battalion commander and a nurse who fell in love with each other and “got married.” The commander was severely wounded in a battle and taken to a hospital away from the front. The nurse, who was pregnant, was left behind. The commander wrote to her to go to his parents and give birth to his child.<sup>12</sup> Tamara S. Umniagina, who was a sanitary officer with the rank of junior sergeant, told Aleksievich that she and her husband fought in the war together and vowed to get married if they survived the war. After the war was over, they got married.<sup>13</sup>

Other unions in the military were more hierarchical in nature and typically mated officers with female soldiers or medical personnel. The women in such relationships took care of the officers’ sexual and other daily needs, such as washing and cleaning. Even such a relationship was understood to be a kind of “marriage” as the fact that these women were derogatorily called “field campaign wives (*polevaia peredvizhnaia zhena*, or PPZh)” attests. In return for their service to a male officer, PPZh were privileged in their living conditions, getting better access to supplies and transportation while

other women went on foot.<sup>14</sup> Not surprisingly, some of them got pregnant while in military service. On rare occasions, PPZh acquired the powers of their consorts and were labeled “autocratic queens (*samoderzhavnaia koroleva*).” However, probably many pregnant women in the army, both PPZh and non-PPZh, attempted to abort.<sup>15</sup> However, if an abortion attempt was discovered, they were discharged.

There were also wartime unions that involved civilian women, mainly with military men. Near the front (and most areas in the west and south of European Russia saw battle), women were fair game for both Russians and Germans. Additionally, military men visited women during business trips, leaves of absence, and re-deployments. Venereal disease (VD) records detail active sexual behavior among demobilized soldiers. Those on vacation or visiting family were also widely recognized as likely VD carriers. Within the military, the most mobile personnel, such as drivers and those responsible for material procurement, tended to have excellent social opportunities. VD reached such proportions that those on leave or official travel were required to obtain and carry certificates guaranteeing their disease-free status.<sup>16</sup>

Hospitalization provided another opportunity for civilian-military contact. Soldiers and officers sometimes checked themselves out of hospital to visit nearby towns or villages. A March 1944 report from the military medical administration (*glavnoe voenno-sanitarnoe upravlenie*) to the Central Committee described drinking bouts, street-fighting, and VD infection during such unregulated escapes. Clearly, casual sexual relationships were also involved.<sup>17</sup> Even worse, the upper echelons of the military medicine service were increasingly convinced that their soldiers were becoming the major vector of syphilis in the general population.<sup>18</sup> Such information suggests that wounded soldiers infected and impregnated civilian women on their way to, from, and during hospitalization.

## THE 1944 FAMILY LAW AND DIVERGING INTERESTS BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

In her memoirs, Mary Leder, who was working in the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) office in 1944 wrote that one of the intentions of the 1944 Family Law was “to reassure the wives of men in the armed forces that they would not be displaced by frontline liaisons.”<sup>19</sup> Archival research shows that there was no such discussion of protecting wives in Khrushchev’s initial draft proposal, “for increasing population in the Soviet Union” or discussions that followed until the promulgation. This pronatalist proposal aimed at increasing population by requiring all citizens to have more than two children. To carry this out in a society with a terribly distorted male-female ratio, Khrushchev considered it important that unmarried women and widows procreate as well as married women.

Khrushchev’s proposal included several key incentives and disincentives for mothers. Logically, Khrushchev’s draft set the amount of postwar government support for single mothers at the same level as the child support

that prewar mothers in *de facto* marriages were receiving from biological fathers. The draft also stated that there had to be an effort to eliminate the idea that out-of-wedlock procreation was immoral from public consciousness. However, these sensible proposals were eliminated or significantly altered during the course of revisions in Moscow.<sup>20</sup> In the final draft the level of government support for single mothers was reduced due to financial considerations, and the morality of illegitimacy was never addressed. Thus, the idea of providing single mothers with sufficient incentive for extra reproduction was compromised from the start.

In contrast, key incentives for men proposed by Khrushchev were all included in the final law. Biological fathers would bear no legal or financial responsibility for out-of-wedlock births. To protect the fathers from child support responsibilities, only registered marriage was legally recognized, and from 1944 on, out-of-wedlock children would have a blank or a dash under "father's name" in their birth certificates. A part of the reason that men's incentives could be easily satisfied was probably that they required no financial commitment on the part of the government, unlike support for mothers. The People's Commissariat of Finance (NKFin) played a key role in revising Khrushchev's draft and was interested in minimizing total budget. However, it is also evident that the policymakers paid little attention to how the creation of illegitimacy or reduced support for single mothers would affect women's reproductive decisions. At the highest level of discussions, no one followed through on women's interests.<sup>21</sup> In this way, postwar pronatalism became a male-centered policy.<sup>22</sup>

The 1944 Family Law made clear distinction between marriage and an intimate relationship and between legitimate and illegitimate children. Now everyone was to have a legal marital identity, defined by marriage registration. However, implementation was not simple because marriages were in flux during the war as discussed above. Faced with the new law, men and women often disagreed about whether their relationship was marital. Typically, men who were in prewar marriages, but lived with a new "wife" would not be able to become legal fathers to their new child(ren) without divorcing the prewar wife, but the legal wife often refused to divorce. A pregnant woman whose prewar husband was missing and wanted to legalize her new "marriage" did not know how to divorce the missing husband. In these cases, self-defined marital identity was different from legal status as newly defined by the 1944 Law.

Especially in the early postwar years, divorce cases reveal the diverging interests men and women faced in their relationships. Most often, it was men who wanted to divorce prewar wives, often to legalize a new "marriage," and end child support responsibilities. Women wanted to legalize existing *de facto* marriages and receive child support from absent husbands. Legal inquiries clearly reveal this deeply gendered attitude toward marriage and divorce in the postwar period. Soon after the 1944 Law was introduced, legal experts noted that most cases of divorce were filed by service men and white-collar male workers.<sup>23</sup>

The actual number of marriages that were ending in the postwar period cannot be known from divorce statistics. The registered number of divorces was greatly reduced from the prewar period. The available all-Union statistics shows that the number of divorces (6,600) in 1945 was less than 8 percent of the 1943 figure (83,000).<sup>24</sup> However, this did not reflect the prewar *de facto* marriages that were dissolved in the postwar period. Moreover, this reduction owed much to the 1944 Family Law's strict requirements as well as the inability of the bureaucracy to deal with the new system. Wives with missing husbands who wanted to legalize wartime "marriage" were told to wait for an instruction. Plaintiffs were required to announce a divorce filing in a local newspaper, but many complained that their local papers were not publishing such announcements and courts would not accept their cases.<sup>25</sup> As the fate of missing spouses became clear, and the bureaucracy began to function in coordination with newspapers, divorce filing increased dramatically in 1946 and 1947. The all-Union number of divorces steadily increased every year to 140,223 in 1956.<sup>26</sup>

From the small number of divorce cases, one clear characteristic emerged. The People's Commissariat of Justice (NKIu) reported that plaintiffs were predominantly male in most cities. In 1944, in the city of Moscow, of the 470 divorce cases, 386 were filed by men and 84 by women. In Moscow oblast, of the 50 divorce cases, 38 were filed by men and 12 by women.<sup>27</sup> In Ukraine of the 32 divorce cases, 25 were filed by men and 7 by women. In the city of Leningrad, of the 59 cases examined from September to December 1944, 51 were filed by men and 8 by women.<sup>28</sup> Such a high ratio of men among divorce petitioners seems to have continued. In 1947, of the 103 divorce cases examined by the USSR Supreme Court, at least 86 percent were filed by men.<sup>29</sup>

The other major characteristic was that in most cases, the filing was motivated by the presence of a new wife or family. According to NKIu's study of 1944 divorce cases, one of the commonest causes for divorce was presence of another *de facto* family or marriage, constituting 28 percent of all cases both in RSFSR and Ukraine.<sup>30</sup> In RSFSR, this was the number one reason for divorce filing. In the cities of Moscow and Leningrad, the presence of another marriage was the most common reason for divorce. In L'vov oblast, Moscow oblast, and the city of Sverdlovsk, from 24 to 76 percent of the cases were motivated by the desire to legalize postwar families.<sup>31</sup> For example, Comrade Shiriaev of Khar'kov filed for divorce in December 1944, because his new "wife" would soon give birth. He wanted to make the new marriage legal and register the child under his family name.<sup>32</sup>

In Ukraine, where women and men were taken for labor by the Nazis and many women survived by fraternizing with Nazi occupiers, it is not surprising that infidelity (36%) was the most common reason for divorce, followed by the presence of a second family. However, even in these cases, it was reported that men were hiding their real motives: the presence of another relationship. NKIu Ukraine reported that according to the analysis of cases between February and March 1945, military men often blamed their long

absence from home during the war for the break-up of old families and the formation of new ones. However, many of them initially covered up the presence of the new family or intimate relations with other women (*blizkaia sviaz' s drugimi zhenshchinami*). Citizen Dorogobuzhan, for example, filed in Khar'kov's People's court to divorce his wife Evgeniia. They had two teen-aged daughters. He reported the reason for divorce as his wife's adultery with German occupiers. However, during the court hearing, it was revealed that the plaintiff was living with another woman. The oblast court turned down the divorce request.<sup>33</sup>

As the Ukrainian case shows, reasons such as infidelity, incompatible characters, and infertility often masked hidden motivations, especially when an immediate remarriage was planned, suggesting that it was much more prevalent than statistics indicated. In many of these cases, men tried to present higher moral cause for divorce than the presence of another relationship, often providing evidence for their adultery. Many disguised cases were uncovered. In Kiev, Bilianovskii and Bilianovskaia were married before the war. They had a daughter, but she died during World War II. The husband was in the Red Army between 1941 and 1944. After the service, he came back to his wife. A second child was born and was recognized by Bilianovskii as his own, but when he filed for divorce, his reason was his wife's adultery with occupation police. His wife denied the accusation and revealed his true motive. Her husband had already been living for four months with another woman, who wanted a legal marriage with him.<sup>34</sup>

Significantly fewer cases of divorce were filed by women than men at least for two reasons. First, their remarriage market was much more competitive, especially for the middle-aged women. Second, bereaved wives and their children enjoyed financial advantages such as inheritance, state aid, and pension, if and only if they were legal family at the beginning of the war. Thus, prewar *de facto* wives of husbands who had died or gone missing in the war were more interested in legalizing marriage than in getting a divorce. As with men, new partners figured prominently in divorce proceedings initiated by women, but the latter's presentation of motives was quite different, emphasizing the interests of their children rather than their own. With a focus on children's interests, condemnation of a husband's wartime infidelity became secondary, if mentioned at all.<sup>35</sup>

## GENDER RELATIONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF A POSTWAR UNDERCLASS

Some of the difficulties in handling requests for child support and registering prewar marriage were resolved by additional instructions issued on November 27, 1944 and January 20, 1945. These NKIu instructions decreed that biological fathers of children born prior to the 1944 Law be held responsible for child support even if they were not in registered marriages with the mothers. Wives of dead or missing soldiers would be able to register their prewar marriages by presenting evidence of their *de facto* marriages and the

proof of husband's death. Thus, the rights of children born prior to the war and those of bereaved wives were protected.

The question about out-of-wedlock children was harder to resolve. The new law provoked problems and complaints. For example, A.A. Safonova from Vladivostok wrote:

I got married again, to a person whom I consider my legal husband in all respects. I have lived with him already for half a year and I will soon have a child. The child will have a real father, but will not be permitted to bear the family name and patronymic of the father. In official documents the child will have the status of "fatherless (*bez ottsa*)," which is what I, the mother, consider a most dubious title.<sup>36</sup>

Legal experts would soon argue that out-of-wedlock children should have equal rights with legitimate children to inheritance, pension, and state aid for families of service men, just as before the war. The only right postwar out-of-wedlock children would lose was the right to child support from their biological fathers.

Regarding the birth registration of out-of-wedlock children, opinions were divided among legal experts; however, the initial consensus was that the children should be allowed to register under the biological father's name, if the father wished and the mother agreed.<sup>37</sup> Apparently, this was a sensitive issue, because the editor of this draft, most likely the head of NKIu SSSR N. M. Rychkov, crossed out this statement and instead added one paragraph at the end of the letter, stating that during the discussion of the instructions, the issue of registering out-of-wedlock children under the father's name had been raised. However, because this proposal was a "significant (*sushchestvennyi*)" amendment to Article 21 of the 1944 Law, it would not be included in the draft supplementary instructions. "I think this matter should be discussed separately," added the postscript. Clearly, the Commissar and his legal advisors were at odds on this issue.<sup>38</sup>

Some of these NKIu proposals were approved by Molotov, and others were not. Being consistent with the policy's focus on postwar births, in general, the government adopted proposals concerning prewar marriage and child support, while rejecting those concerning postwar out-of-wedlock children and divorce. None of the measures which tried to improve the legal rights of postwar out-of-wedlock children was mentioned. Regarding divorce cases, simplified procedures were applied to the case of spouses missing in the war, the mentally or physically disabled, or those convicted of crimes. However, otherwise, easy divorces were disallowed, even for marriages that for all intents and purposes had ended before the 1944 Law. In sum, some of the legal experts' early proposals that tried to simplify divorce procedures and all of those which allowed recognition of paternity for out-of-wedlock children were denied. It would take more than twenty years for these policies to change.

Many legal inquiries and complaints were written to the ministries, individual leaders, the Supreme Court, and Supreme Soviet by those who were

unhappy about the legal system, which resulted in the birth of millions of out-of-wedlock children in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As hundreds of thousands and then millions of children entered this category, gradually it was recognized that postwar gender relations were creating an underprivileged group of single mothers and their children in terms of health, financial, and moral conditions.

In 1948, female party members A. Abramova and O. Mishakova studied the condition of single mothers and their children using materials collected by the Ministry of Health (MZ), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and the Party.<sup>39</sup> They also interviewed single mothers. Based on this study, Abramova wrote a report addressed to Stalin, dated August 14, which described the “extremely grave (*krainie ser’eznyi*)” conditions that single mothers and their children were facing and proposed “immediate intervention (*nemedlennoe vmeshatel'stvo*).”<sup>40</sup>

Abramova's report showed the rapidly increasing numbers of out-of-wedlock children. According to the available statistics, about half a million out-of-wedlock children were born in 1945. In 1946 and 1947, the absolute number of out-of-wedlock births was 50 percent higher than in 1945. She predicted that the number would continue to grow as general living conditions among the population improved. The percentages were shockingly high in large cities. In Leningrad in 1945, 43.8 percent of all births were out-of-wedlock. In 1946, Moscow (29 percent), Kiev (28 percent), and Minsk (23 percent) all posted impressive rates. Since such a large number of births were out-of-wedlock, Abramova thought it necessary for the state and party to consider the conditions of single motherhood as an important factor in population recovery.

The report showed that single mothers were morally and materially battered and that this had a direct negative impact on the health of their children. First, Abramova discussed how single mothers were the victims of wartime demographic changes and of the prevailing type of postwar gender relations in which men betrayed them. The “Female Perspective” given in the epigraph above presents this viewpoint. Abramova's interviews with female factory workers provided ample example of those who became single mothers as a result of men's betrayal. To highlight her point that single mothers were not frivolous, Abramova mentioned that most of these women had a relationship with their partners for two to three years. However, commonly male partners left the women as soon as they found out about their pregnancy and began going out with other women. The single mothers told Abramova that these “male butterflies (*muzhichki-motyl'ki*)” promised a wonderful life together with beautiful words. However, all of this turned out to be “the conscious trickery of the immoral (*zavedomyi obman razlozhivshikhsia liudei*).”<sup>41</sup>

She discussed in detail the declining physical health of single mothers and their children. In 1946, 20,007 children and in 1947, 35,790 children under one-year-old were sent to orphanages in the Soviet Union. The most shocking fact was that in 1946, 33 percent, and in 1947, 44 percent of these

children died.<sup>42</sup> In addition, Abramova argued that their moral and psychological health were at stake. This concerned the new birth registration system in which fathers of out-of-wedlock children were not recorded anywhere in official documents. In birth certificates, the line for father would be simply crossed out. She argued that this registration system was already causing psychological damage to single mothers and possibly to out-of-wedlock children in the future.

Sooner or later, either in school or at home, a child will face the question: who is your father? Therefore, we must change this condition and indicate on the birth certificate in the space labeled "father," his first name and family name, as reported by the mother. Such a record would relieve the single mother of the unnecessary and agonizing task of explaining to her child. It will also protect the child from possible moral trauma...<sup>43</sup>

Abramova emphasized the urgency of improving the physical, moral, and material conditions of single mothers and their children, but in order to fundamentally resolve the problems with single motherhood, ultimately men's attitudes toward family needed to change. To this end, the report proposed to levy heavy taxes on single men, up to 45 percent of their wages.<sup>44</sup> Abramova probably thought that increased financial burden might convince men to form a legal family and stop changing partners, the common practice, referred to in plaintive letters as "polygamy (*mnogozhenstvo*)."<sup>45</sup>

Women understood that it was postwar demography as much as the 1944 Family Law which made it hard for them to give births. In January 1955 when Khrushchev publicly criticized singles, many women responded to this speech and argued that their lack of children was not a sign of irresponsibility, but because the war deprived them of future husbands. A group of single mothers wrote to Khrushchev, "after the war according to the statistics, there are more women than men. This means that not everyone can find a partner."<sup>46</sup> A childless woman wrote to Khrushchev directly criticizing the logic of his policy. She would have liked to become a mother, but because her partner already had a legal wife, she could not.<sup>47</sup> Another single mother wrote: "We women, of course, ask you, Comrade Khrushchev, to help us with amending the law... If you comply with our request, which women await and watch closely, it will also be beneficial for the fertility of our generation."<sup>48</sup>

## THE FAILURE OF PRONATALISM: GENDER AND REPRODUCTIVE DECISIONS

Postwar single women often did not want a(nother) child because they understood that health, moral, and financial conditions for themselves and their children were at stake. Nevertheless, statistics show that 8.7 million illegitimate children were born between 1945 and 1955 alone. For the same period, the annual percentage of out-of-wedlock births ranged between 14.5 (in 1955) and 19.7 percent (in 1950).<sup>49</sup> The millions of out-of-wedlock births



became part of the Central Statistical Administration (TsSU) director V. N. Starovskii's positive tenth anniversary assessment of the 1944 Family Law, addressed on May 19, 1954 to G. M. Malenkov, the chairman of Sovmin SSSR.<sup>50</sup> Did women give birth anyway despite their anger and resentment toward men's behavior in and out of marriage?

Among postwar single mothers, there were those who gave birth knowing that they would raise the child by themselves. Often, hopes of regularizing marital status persisted throughout the pregnancy. Also, many actually believed that they were in *de facto* marriage, even if their children were officially recorded as "fatherless." But by 1946–47 post-victory optimism that the state would somehow take care of its children had worn off. Abramova's 1948 call for immediate intervention and repeated demands for legal revisions from the bureaucracy and public make it clear that for many Soviet citizens the law was a failure. But demographic analysis of whether the postwar family policy produced more children than in the absence of the new law is impossible for lack of comparable statistical data for the prewar when there was simply no legal status called out-of-wedlock children.

So how can we evaluate the law's effectiveness? Here I would like to present three perspectives from which to judge Khrushchev's 1944 Law a failure. First of all, since Starovskii had predicted an out-of-wedlock birth percentage of 25%, the above-mentioned data makes clear that these goals were never achieved.<sup>51</sup> As a "birth plan," the law never achieved the planned targets. In Soviet parlance, it was quantitatively "underfulfilled." Secondly, from a qualitative point of view, many children abandoned by single women in state orphanages got sick and died. Those raised by single mothers were generally financially worse-off. Thirdly, survey data proves the linkage between contested gender relations and runaway abortion statistics. This, in turn, meant deteriorated female reproductive health, a long-term demographic minus at the heart of the late Soviet and post-Soviet population predicament.

In 1949 the Ministry of Health studied underground abortion in several cities and oblasts by asking women hospitalized after botched abortions to fill in a questionnaire anonymously. The result shows that both married and single women were undertaking abortion and that many single women were referring to their relationship as "*de facto* marriage," the medical profession recording them as such. The percentage of women in "*de facto* marriage" and "unmarried" varied depending on the place: 10 percent in Rostov oblast, and 12 percent in the city of Moscow, and 42 percent in Sochi. These predominantly "married" women together with single mothers named the number one reason (45.7%) that they had an underground abortion as "unstable family," meaning "husband has a second family or lives with another wife," or "marriage is not registered."<sup>52</sup> Clearly, unstable marriage affected reproductive decisions of not only unmarried, but also married women.

The significance of this result becomes clearer if compared with the mid-1930s survey of reasons for abortion, which was probably the last survey officially conducted of abortion practice. In this study, women who applied

for clinical abortion under the legalized abortion system were surveyed. According to this study, which involved 5,365 women, the number one reason (31 percent) for abortion was economic conditions, second (29 percent) was already large families, and third (20 percent), pregnancy was as a result of casual sex. Various other family problems comprised only 8 percent.<sup>53</sup> Clearly, a significant change in abortion dynamics had taken place during and after the war.

Negative trends in postwar fertility were not addressed in Starovskii's 1954 assessment of the 1944 Family Law, which stressed the overwhelming success of postwar pronatalism. However, an honest assessment of pronatalist policy should include the negative effects of the unstable gender relations nurtured by the 1944 Family Law. While the damage to gender relations cannot be quantified directly, abortion statistics provide clear evidence of the scale on which married and unmarried women responded to unstable family relationships by undercutting the government's pronatalist plans.

The registered number of nonclinical abortions shows that between 1946 and 1955, more than 11 million women ended up in the hospital with botched abortion or miscarriage.<sup>54</sup> Considering that medical professionals estimated that about 15 percent were miscarriage, approximately 9.4 million were botched abortions.<sup>55</sup> No one really knew how many more "successful" illegal abortions were performed. One method of estimation would look at the jump in the number of clinical abortions after the 1955 Legalization of Abortion. In 1954, 400,000 clinical abortions were recorded, as opposed to 3,320,000 in 1956. If we were to interpret this quantum leap as a reflection of the number of women per year who previously undertook underground abortion, and if we use the 1949 MZ study's result, it is highly likely that abortions caused by unstable relationships in the postwar period up to 1955 far exceeded the number of out-of-wedlock children.<sup>56</sup> In any case, it is clear that the scale of postwar abortions ran into the tens of millions, a significant drag on a pronatalist policy that aimed to maximize conceptions, births, and eventually labor force.

Postwar Soviet women, intelligentsia, female party activists, doctors, and legal professionals all addressed the emergence of millions of underprivileged mothers and children as a social, moral, legal, and health issue. However, this qualitative argument did not convince the Soviet leadership, which was most interested in the quantity of population. Misinformed by TsSU's distorted statistics and analysis, the Soviet leadership refused to recognize gender relations as one of the fundamental determinants of postwar fertility.<sup>57</sup> Failing to incorporate the clearly enunciated and completely different female perspectives, the postwar law and practice did harm to both the quality and quantity of the Soviet population.

## NOTES

1. 1948 report on single women and out-of-wedlock children written by A. Abramova addressed to Stalin. RGASPI f. 17, op. 118, d. 255, ll. 49–50.

2. Letter cited in "Ot imeni syna" *Literaturnaia gazeta*, August 28, 1954. KZ OBS stands for *kodeks zakonov ob opeke, brake, i sem'e* of RSFSR, promulgated in 1945 to reflect and interpret the 1944 Family Law.
3. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Wives' Tales," in *Tear Off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 259.
4. GARF f. 8009, op. 1, d. 497, ll. 172–174.
5. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class: the Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia," *Journal of Modern History*, 65:4 (December 1993), 756. By marriage, a husband's or wife's class could fundamentally affect one's social and political life. However, ascription based on family background could be manipulated. For example, Fitzpatrick has argued that one of the ways to manipulate ascribed class was by "marrying down." Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Becoming Soviet," in *Tear Off the Masks!*, 16.
6. Golfo Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926–1936* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 140–144.
7. *Naselenie Rossii v XX veke: Istoricheskie ocherki* tom 2, 1940–1959 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2001), 25.
8. For this figure, see Rebecca Manley, "The Evacuation and Survival of Soviet Civilians, 1941–1946" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 2004), 2. Mention should be made of the millions deported as ethnic minority groups in preparation for the war, which is not included in the number of evacuees.
9. During the war as men and women were establishing liaisons and calling each other "husband" and "wife," they expected that the 1926 Family Law would apply to their relationships. However, this expectation would be betrayed with the introduction of the 1944 Family Law.
10. After the war there were cases where multiple women claimed aid as the bereaved wives of the same male soldier. Since the Soviet government could not legally recognize polygamy, the court determined who the wife was at the time of mobilization. For such a case, see TsMAM f. 819, op. 3, d. 32, ll. 1–116.
11. Iu. N. Ivanova, *Khrabreishie iz prekrasnykh: zhenshchiny Rossii v voynakh* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2002), 241–243.
12. Svetlana A. Aleksievich, *U voyny ne zhenskoe litso. Poslednie svideteli: povesti* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988), 170.
13. *Ibid.*, 225.
14. Barbara Alpern Engel and Anastasia Posadskaya-Vanderbeck, ed., *A Revolution of Their Own: Voices of Women in Soviet History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 197–198.
15. Mark Popovskii, *Tretii lishnii: On, ona i sovetskii rezhim* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange, Ltd., 1985), 93–102.
16. GARF f. 8009, op. 1, d. 489, ll. 4–5.
17. RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 72, ll. 39, 100.
18. GARF f. 8009, op. 32, d. 164, l. 1.
19. Mary Leder, *My Life in Stalinist Russia: An American Woman Looks Back*, ed. by Laurie Bernstein, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 255.
20. GARF f. 8009, op. 1, d. 497, ll. 167, 175, 176, 178, 179.

21. See Chapter 2 of my dissertation, Mie Nakachi, "Replacing the Dead: The Politics of Reproduction in the Postwar Soviet Union, 1944–1955" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2008).
22. For the details of Khrushchev's proposal, see Mie Nakachi, "N. S. Khrushchev and the 1944 Soviet Family Law: Politics, Reproduction, and Language," *East European Politics and Societies* 20:1 (2006), 40–68.
23. The rate of male plaintiffs was lowest in Moscow, where 59 percent of the selected divorce cases were filed by men. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 492, l. 57. Other regions recorded 60–80 percent. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 492, l. 151.
24. For 1943, see RGAE f.1562, op. 329, d. 1449, l. 13. For 1945, see RGAE f. 1562, op.329, d.1871, ll. 1, 110.
25. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1635, ll. 51–55.
26. RGAE f. 1562, op. 27, d. 209, l. 4.
27. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 491, l. 50.
28. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 491, ll. 2, 50, 72.
29. Fitzpatrick, "Wives' Tales," 256.
30. Other major reasons were: family quarrels, infidelity, the spouse has been deprived of freedom, and chronic disease of the spouse. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 491, ll. 2–3, 94.
31. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 491, ll. 151–152.
32. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1630, l. 107.
33. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 491, ll. 105–107.
34. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 491, l. 11. See also GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1630, ll. 261–262.
35. Such cases are found, for example, in GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1630, l. 137 and in GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1635, l. 1.
36. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1630, l. 180.
37. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1634, l. 88.
38. Handwritten editing. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1634, l. 90.
39. Abramova's position in the Party is not clear in the document, but this is probably the investigator of the Party Control Committee discussed by Sheila Fitzpatrick in "Wives' Tales," 247–248.
40. RGASPI f. 17, op. 118, d. 255, l. 49.
41. RGASPI f. 17, op. 118, d. 255, ll. 49–50.
42. GARF f. 8009, op. 32, d. 949, ll. 23–25.
43. RGASPI f. 17, op. 118, d. 255, l. 55.
44. RGASPI f. 17, op. 118, d. 255, ll. 55–56.
45. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1936, l. 19. In a letter to the editor of *Literaturnaia gazeta*, such practitioners were labeled "khans (*ottsy-khany*).\" *Literaturnaia gazeta*, August 28, 1954.
46. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1936, l. 87.
47. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1936, ll. 38–42.
48. GARF f. 9492, op. 1, d. 1936, l. 67.
49. For the number of children registered without father's names in 1950, see RGAE f. 1562, op. 33, d. 1692, l. 1; for the 1955 number, see RGAE f. 1562, op. 27, d. 110, l. 3.
50. RGAE f. 1562, op. 33, d. 2163, ll. 7–12.
51. RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 387, l. 96.

52. Second was bad housing conditions (28.8 percent), third, hard physical work at enterprises (15.4 percent), and fourth, difficult material conditions (6.7 percent). GARF f. 8009, op. 22, d. 227, l. 316.
53. Frederick J. Taussig, *Abortion, spontaneous and induced* (St. Louis: The C. V. Mosby Company, 1936), 410, cited in Henry E. Sigerist, *Socialized Medicine in the Soviet Union* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1937), 267.
54. TsADKM f. 218, op. 1, d. 187, l. 46.
55. TsADKM f. 218, op. 1, d. 187, l. 48. For the definition of non-clinical abortions, see Nakachi, "Replacing the Dead," 104.
56. TsADKM f. 218, op. 1, d. 187, l. 46.
57. For more on TsSU's important role in this process, see Mie Nakachi, "Population, politics and reproduction: Late Stalinism and its legacy," in Juliane Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia: Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (London: Routledge, 2006).

## CHAPTER 8

# COLLECTIVE ACTION IN SOVIET SOCIETY: THE CASE OF WAR VETERANS<sup>1</sup>

*Mark Edele*

### I. LEONID ALEKSANDROVICH'S CAMPAIGN

On November 10, 1978, a landmark decision of Party and government made "war participant" (*uchastnik voiny*) a category of positive legal discrimination. A few months later, in March 1979, Leonid Aleksandrovich K. received a temporary document indicating his membership in this new status group. Once this paper expired, the former war correspondent set about, in October 1980, to visit the military registration office of Kiev raion in Moscow in order to exchange the temporary certificate into a permanent one. Leonid Aleksandrovich was in for a bad surprise. The military authorities told him, politely but sternly, that he could not obtain the certificate that would make his status as war veteran official and him eligible for various privileges.<sup>2</sup>

The privileges were considerable. According to resolution No. 907, passed by Central Committee of the Communist Party together with the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union on November 10, 1978, "participants of the Great Patriotic War" had the right to receive the following benefits:

- Once a year they got a round trip by train to any destination in the Soviet Union for only 50 percent of the ticket price. If no train line existed to where they wanted to go, they could also use ships, planes, or long-distance bus services for the same reduced rate.
- They could receive interest-free loans for the construction of private, individual houses according to the same conditions already received by war invalids.
- They had the right to take their annual holiday at whatever time they pleased and if they so desired, they could also get an additional two weeks of unpaid holiday per year.
- After retirement, they had the right to keep on using the polyclinic they had been assigned to while they still worked.

- They had the right to preferential access to travel passes to sanatoria, *profilatorii* and holiday homes, which were handed out by their places of employment.
- They also had the right to preferential access to gardening cooperatives as well as to the installation of private telephones.

Reading paragraph one of resolution 907, one could easily share Leonid Aleksandrovich's notion that this document assigned privileges to all war veterans. In an attempt to control the costs of the legislation, however, paragraph two narrowly defined the group of "war participants." It was this second section that would cause Leonid Aleksandrovich and others sleepless nights. It defined the group with access to the new privileges as follows:

- Military personnel (*voennosluzhashchie*), who served in military units, staff and enterprises who were part of the field army (*deistvuiushchaia armii*a) during the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War, or during other battle operations in the defense of the Soviet Union.
- Partisans of the Great Patriotic War.
- MVD and KGB personnel under certain conditions.<sup>3</sup>

The first term, which restricted the group eligible for the privileges of resolution 907 was "deistvuiushchaia armii.a." Only veterans who had served in this "field army" were "war participants" in the understanding of the November 10, 1978 resolution. The decision of who was and who was not part of the field army had long troubled military bureaucrats. In 1956 the general staff of the Soviet Army passed the directive No. 168780, tabulating the units to be considered as part of the category. This list was necessary, because service in the field army counted double with regards to military pensions, allowing earlier retirement.<sup>4</sup> The result of the interaction of directive no. 168780 of 1956 and resolution 907 of 1978 was that many veterans, including many who had received the commemorative medals "For Victory over Germany" of 1945 as well as the various anniversary medals ("Twenty Years Victory in the Great Patriotic War"; "25 Years Victory"; "Thirty Years Victory"), were excluded from the benefits defined for "war participants."<sup>5</sup> Leonid Aleksandrovich was one of them, as he had been a frontline journalist, attached to the office of *Izvestiia* in Moscow, which was, of course, not part of the all-important list of units.

War correspondents were also excluded by a second terminological trick, which in some ways was more outrageous than the first one. The decision to restrict privileges to people who had been in the field army did make some sense in principle—after all, it was a difference, if soldiers had stood under fire at the frontline, or if they had trained recruits somewhere in the hinterland. The second exclusion built into the law, however, is easier explained as an attempt to keep costs low while at the same time enjoying the propaganda effect of a major law privileging veterans. The 1978 resolution defined war participants expressly as *voennosluzhashchie*, that is, soldiers. The Armed

Forces' civilian personnel (*volnonaemnye*) were thus excluded from the group of *uchastniki voiny*, whether or not they had stood under fire at the frontline. Again, war correspondents working for civilian newspapers were a case in point.<sup>6</sup>

The restriction of the privileged group to *voennosluzhashchie* of the field army was completely incomprehensible to war veterans like Leonid Aleksandrovich. In a letter to General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, the former frontline correspondent described his reaction:

This tormented me and for several nights after this incident I could not sleep. How could that be: I was at the Western Front, the Northwestern, Briansk, Don, Stalingrad, Central, Second Ukrainian, Third Belorussian, and First Belorussian fronts; I spent the entire time in fighting units and sub-units, including at the very frontline; I published about three hundred informations, sketches, correspondences, and essays in *Izvestiia*, which told the people the truth about the war and its heroism; I was a participant in the conference about the capitulation of fascist Germany—and I, it turns out, am not a war participant?<sup>7</sup>

In a very emotional document of sometimes great rhetorical strength, Leonid Aleksandrovich argued against what he took to be a major insult—that he was excluded from the group of *uchastniki voiny*. He recounted his career from senior political officer in 1941 to lieutenant-colonel (*podpolkovnik*) after war's end. "How could that be: they had given me military ranks at the front, and nevertheless, it turns out, I was not a war participant?" He listed his medals and battle decorations and again asked, how, in all the world, he could not be considered a war veteran.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, Leonid Aleksandrovich decided that he would not accept this incomprehensible decision. He gathered all documentation about his war participation and the books about the war he had published and went to see the head of the military registration office of Kiev raion in Moscow, military commissar colonel A. E. Mal'tsev:

And again I was hit with disappointment, which offended my honor as an officer and a party member. Colonel A. E. Mal'tsev first looked quickly at a few documents and right away called on the telephone: "Comrade general! I have a former special correspondent of *Izvestiia* here. He asks to have his temporary certificate of war participation changed into a permanent one. What to do? Not positive (*ne polozheno*)? Understood."<sup>9</sup>

Leonid Aleksandrovich was not prepared to accept defeat. A party member since 1927 and a retired lieutenant-colonel, he was well connected, knew how to work the system, and was ready to do so. He requested the phone number of the general, obtained it, and called him from his home phone—a sign of his membership in the Soviet elite—to argue his case. The general was very friendly, listened to him respectfully, only to inform him that he could not receive the new privileges. Annoyed, Leonid Aleksandrovich told



him that he did not need any privileges, as he was doing quite well as a personal pensioner of Union level. What he wanted was official recognition of his status as a veteran, not material benefits.<sup>10</sup>

The insult of exclusion from the group of “war participants” hit deep and fueled a veritable one-man campaign for recognition. After a second unsuccessful and rather polemical phone conversation with the general, Leonid Aleksandrovich called, first, the political department of the Moscow military registration office, then the department for print media at the Main Political Administration of the army, and third the boss of the department for central newspapers in the Central Committee of the Party itself. Everybody he talked to agreed with his basic point—that, of course, he should be considered a war participant. But they all also told him that nothing could be done about his exclusion from the group of those officially recognized by the recent government and party resolution. Finally, the annoyed veteran wrote a long letter to Brezhnev, which made it into the archives and allows us to know about this story.<sup>11</sup>

The former frontline correspondent was not alone in his personal campaign to get accepted into the officially recognized group of war participants. Ten days after he had typed his letter to Brezhnev, a group of former war correspondents led by the member of the Supreme Soviet, secretary of the Union of Writers of the Soviet Union, and Hero of Socialist Labor A. A. Surov sent a similar defense of their status as war participants to Brezhnev. And on November 30, 1980, a group of sixteen former war correspondents posted an analogous letter to the Central Committee,<sup>12</sup> from where the letters were forwarded to the Main Political Administration of the army with the task to review this problem. Two months later—and after consultations with the General Staff, the Central Administration of Cadres and the Central Financial Administration of the Ministry of Defense—the Main Political Administration reported back to the Central Committee with a recommendation to admit former frontline correspondents into the privileged group of war participants as defined by law. After all, the report pointed out, there were not many of these journalists. According to the army, no more than 400 such cases existed in the Soviet Union, so financial liabilities were small.<sup>13</sup> A little later, on February 27, 1981, this decision was taken by the Central Committee and Leonid Aleksandrovich and his colleagues were added to the privileged group.<sup>14</sup>

The interaction between former war correspondents and the Central Committee apparatus, neatly contained in one small file in RGANI, illustrates how the negotiations about special status worked on a more general scale.<sup>15</sup> Whenever a subgroup of veterans got a certain privilege, others started a usually uncoordinated but nevertheless effective letter writing campaign, asking to be admitted to the advantaged group. During the war and its immediate aftermath, the state often responded positively to such requests; between 1948 and the 1970s the authorities were more resistant. In the context of the promotion of the war cult as a new legitimizing myth since the 1960s, and especially since 1975, the state returned to a more affirmative

approach.<sup>16</sup> By the early 1980s, indeed, we can speak of something like a Little Deal between the veterans and the state, where the former received both material and symbolic benefits and the right to organize in return for the ritual display of loyalty.<sup>17</sup>

## II. SOLDIERS INTO VETERANS

The Little Deal was the result of a long historical process, transforming “soldiers” into “veterans.” The former had been an important social group ever since the introduction of generalized military service in 1874 and particularly since 1917, when they played a central role in the making of the Bolshevik revolution. Those who defended the new regime against its various enemies during the civil war, and those who pledged to do so in the case of a future foreign intervention (which the political leadership expected with the certainty of a historical law), emerged as a central constituency within “militarized socialism.”<sup>18</sup> During the catastrophe of the German-Soviet war of 1941–1945, the status of soldiers was further elevated, creating an army of millions of veterans who felt they had defended not only family, home, and hearth, but also saved the regime and the Soviet people—even civilization itself—from the barbarism of the German Nazis.<sup>19</sup>

As millions of self-assertive citizen-soldiers were demobilized after 1945, a nervous regime showered them with propaganda claiming that special treatment, a special status, “the love, care and attention of their fellow countrymen” awaited the returning heroes.<sup>20</sup> It seemed to many that the leadership had thus acknowledged what popular sentiment had long known: that the immensity of wartime suffering, sacrifice, and service had transformed the achieved status of the soldier into an ascribed status of the war veteran.<sup>21</sup> The actual benefits for veterans, however, were rather slim. Moreover, most of them were temporary measures for the immediate crisis of demobilization, not continuing benefits for veterans. The exceptions were some minor educational privileges, an array of special provisions for war invalids, and the important rights attached to major military decorations.<sup>22</sup>

The short honeymoon between veterans and the state came to an abrupt halt in 1947/48. The position of war invalids varied widely according to circumstances, but overall, the legislation and its typically Soviet (non-)implementation left a lot to be desired. Disabled veterans were often confined to the margins of Soviet society.<sup>23</sup> In October 1948, their position changed for the worse as wartime regulations allowing invalids of the lowest category (group III) to receive both a wage and their full pension were changed to the prewar status quo, which left them the choice of work with a reduced pension or no pension at all. At the same time, another loophole in the legislation was closed, destroying the widespread strategy of city-dwelling invalids to eke out a living by combining a part-time job with their full pension payment and a well-tended garden providing foodstuffs. Finally, a review of the administrative procedures for the payment of benefits for decorations showed in 1947 how expensive this system of special privileges for

war heroes really was. As a result, the regime canceled the vast majority of these benefits altogether, abolishing the most important special provisions for veterans of the “Great Patriotic War.”<sup>24</sup>

As mass demobilization came to an end in 1948, the status group of veterans had thus been abolished. In a society where state-defined population categories were of utmost importance—influencing anything from choice of occupation to level of consumption—this refusal of the state to regard veterans as a category worthy of special treatment was highly significant. From 1948 until 1978, veterans were not a status group, had few (if they were war invalids) or no special rights, and hardly figured in state policy or even, more generally, in “state perception.”<sup>25</sup> This started to slowly change from 1965 onward, as the growing attempt to make the Great Patriotic War into the central legitimizing myth of this polity led to an increasing interest in the position of veterans within Soviet society.<sup>26</sup> However, only in 1978 and only after prolonged and serious political struggle behind the facades of the “stagnant” Brezhnev regime was a special status for veterans of the Great Patriotic War created.

### III. ENTITLEMENT GROUP

Until 1947, and again from 1978, the history of Soviet war veterans thus seems to fall into a familiar pattern—the history of state engineering of population categories. This story is consistent with the Foucaultian approach of Stephen Kotkin as well as the more Scottian approach of Sheila Fitzpatrick in the 1990s.<sup>27</sup> In this narrative, the Soviet state produced a status group of soldiers as it needed this group; it prolonged this special status beyond demobilization, as long as the former soldiers seemed a potential threat to public order; it deconstructed this status group once there was no more need for it; and it reconstructed the group again once state interest called for its resurrection. In short, the Soviet behemoth did as it pleased with the veterans, who had to accommodate, willingly or not, to the “grand strategies of the state.”

However, constructing a status group turned out to be much easier than its deconstruction.<sup>28</sup> People did not forget that they had once been privileged. They also did not forget what they had suffered and for whom. And they did not forget the promises that had been made, and that they had turned out to be hollow. While officially they had a right to nothing, most veterans retained a sense that this neglect was unjust. Many felt that they deserved a good postwar life or—if the current historical conjuncture did not allow that—at least a privileged position in society. For many veterans, to be sure, these aspirations were not connected to a sense of community, an imagined brotherhood of veterans. By and large, the sacrifice was remembered as personal, the promises as promises to an individual, and the entitlement to special treatment as the right of “me” rather than “us.” To speak of veterans as an “imagined community” would thus mean to adapt a fashionable term to an unsuitable context, to join the ranks of what the concept’s

inventor has dubbed the “vampires of banality.”<sup>29</sup> Much better suited to the empirical evidence is another term—the “entitlement group”—a neologism denoting an accumulation of individuals who share a similar sense of deserving special treatment and special respect from the other members of society. This shared sense of entitlement made veterans act alike in certain situations and thus coordinated their actions, to use Hegel’s words, “behind their backs.” Despite their often lacking sense of “groupness” and despite their first nonexistent, then (after 1956) very weak organization, veterans thus acted as if they were a group, a new social entity born out of war.<sup>30</sup>

The considerable pressure which veterans—a group which was officially not supposed to have a common interest or identity—could exert was also crucial in the organizational history of former soldiers.<sup>31</sup> With some local exceptions, veterans’ organizations were prohibited from forming after the war. The political leadership saw them both as unnecessary—veterans were not an “objective” social group but simply Soviet citizens who at some point had fought in the army—and politically dubious. As long as Stalin was alive, the recurrent attempts to form a union of the survivors of the Great Patriotic War thus failed.<sup>32</sup> Under Nikita Khrushchev, a partial reversal of the party line occurred. The context was the attempt of the Soviet Union to join the World Veterans’ Federation (*Fédération Mondiale des Anciens Combattants*, FMAC), an umbrella organization located in Paris. The Soviet leadership saw the FMAC as dominated by anti-Soviet forces and wanted to join to counterbalance this trend. In order to enroll in the international movement of old soldiers, however, they needed a Soviet veterans’ organization to begin with. The leadership thus set about to form a Potemkin facade for this purpose, the Soviet Committee of War Veterans (*Sovetskii komitet veteranov voyny*, or SKVV). However, the veteran activists who were drafted to run the SKVV from 1956 onward continued to misunderstand the statutes of the new institution, which clearly stated that the purpose was international propaganda work, not domestic representation of veteran interests. After some initial clashes with their activists and an enthusiastic response from rank-and-file veterans all over the Soviet Union to the news of the formation of the SKVV, its leadership settled into a compromise—a limited representation of former soldiers was allowed, as long as it was contained to a few people in Moscow, who would serve as middle men for supplicants.<sup>33</sup> The SKVV headquarters thus became a clearing house for complaints and appeals from former soldiers, who wrote in or came in person.<sup>34</sup>

However, this was not enough. The news of the formation of the SKVV was taken by many veterans in the provinces as a starting signal to form their own local chapters; they misunderstood this organization as a mass movement. This local enthusiasm was hard to restrain from above, but the Moscow leaders were unable to convince the Khrushchevian leadership to allow the legalization of the de facto emerging local infrastructure.<sup>35</sup> This changed under Brezhnev, when for a decade local organizations were allowed to develop and the organized veterans’ movement blossomed only to increasingly clash with primary Party organizations. The result was that,

on October 12, 1976, the SKVV was cut back to size through a Central Committee Resolution misleadingly named “on the further improvement of the activities of local organizations of war veterans.” This decision effectively stopped further organizational development and reversed much of what had been achieved on a local level, by resolving the smoldering conflict between local Party and SKVV organizations in favor of the former.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV. COLLECTIVE ACTION

By the time we join Leonid Aleksandrovich in his campaign for recognition, then, the Soviet veterans’ movement considerable dynamism had been curtailed by a strict prohibition of further organizational growth. Both the leadership in Moscow and the activists in the localities thus shifted much of their energies back to a field of politics, which preoccupied many Soviet citizens throughout the existence of this state: the provision of privileges. The prehistory to the 1978 decision is an example of the uncoordinated mass action the entitlement group was able to perform without its members knowing that this was what they were doing. In 1977, the Soviet government had started a campaign to publicly discuss the draft of a new constitution. Soviet citizens were invited to comment in meetings as well as in writing on the quality of the draft and make suggestions for changes. One group that responded particularly enthusiastically was war veterans. They demanded a special status for them be written into the constitution, to make “respect” (*uvazhenie*) toward them a major goal of government and society alike, and to legislate an enormous range of legal privileges.<sup>37</sup> Brezhnev, much more pragmatic than his predecessor and with his own political identity defined in part by war participation, soon responded. At a meeting of the Supreme Soviet in October 1977, which considered the project of the new basic law, he noted that such propositions were not suited for institutionalization in a constitution. But, he added, the demands were fair enough and it should indeed be possible to find the means necessary to give them “some more privileges” (*eshche nekotorye l'goty*).<sup>38</sup>

This public (and published) announcement led to a further letter campaign by the entitlement group. In 1977 and 1978, veterans again wrote many hundreds, maybe thousands of letters to demand the implementation of the promise.<sup>39</sup> The veterans’ organization, too, lobbied behind the scenes. The hopes of the veteran representatives to have this legislation out for the 60th anniversary of the Red Army in early 1978 proved futile, however. Negotiations with various ministries and the state planning agency proved complicated and drawn out. Money was a constant concern. There was strong resistance from Gosplan to such an expensive step. After a long back and forth, a compromise was reached in the form of resolution no. 907 of November 10, 1978.<sup>40</sup>

We have already seen what happened next. Those veterans who were excluded from the benefits of the resolution started another campaign for recognition. The war correspondents were not the only veterans who wrote,

called, or went in person to complain about their nonrecognition as war participants. The pressure was so strong, in fact, that the Ministry of Defense tried to calm the waves in 1979 both in the public sphere (the newspaper *Nedel'ia*) and in internal circulars. All those who had received any of the medals commemorating victory, their line went, could consider themselves to be war participants. Not all would get a certificate and privileges, however, as resolution no. 907 only considered former military personnel of the field army.<sup>41</sup>

Such a position, however, could not appease the entitlement group. Too deep were the emotional foundations of this sense of having special rights to recognition to let people like Leonid Aleksandrovich simply accept such a state of affairs. Slowly and reluctantly, the Party-state started to move in their direction by widening the group of privileged war participants. War correspondents were only the first, probably because they were relatively few and also a very well connected and articulate collectivity. Others followed, however: *voennosluzhashchie* who had worked in staff organizations not part of the *deistvuiushchaia armiiia*, if they had been at least one month on commission to the front were included in 1981 as were civilian personnel (*volnonaemnye*) of the field army; in 1985, people who had worked in factories in Leningrad during the blockade were added; in 1988 a subset of privileges was granted to soldiers who served in the hinterland and those Soviet citizens who had worked at the home front;<sup>42</sup> in 1995, former prisoners of war (POWs) joined the privileged group;<sup>43</sup> the Federal Law on Veterans of the same year treated all who had received the Victory Over Germany medal of 1945 as part of the group, whether or not they had served in the field army;<sup>44</sup> and in 2000, a revised version of the law added further categories of veterans.<sup>45</sup> In a related process, the state yielded to demands to increase advantages. In 1979, for example, war participants were freed from interest on loans provided to house-building cooperatives, and in 1980 they received a 50 percent tax exemption on income tax; further increases of privileges were granted in 1984.<sup>46</sup>

## V. THINKING THE ENTITLEMENT GROUP

The interaction between veterans as a social group and the state as the most powerful focus of social integration of Soviet society does not fit the model where groups are created *ex nihilo* through the methods of social engineering at the disposal of the modern state. Such processes of constructing population categories have received enormous attention by philosophers, social scientists, and historians—from Michel Foucault to James Scott, from Sheila Fitzpatrick to Stephen Kotkin, from Terry Martin to Peter Holquist. In this literature, it is usually the state which is the active force, defining the hegemonic discourse, ascribing categories, forging a new society. Those who are being categorized, strategized, and engineered can only react with “little tactics of the habitat” to this enormous force of social domination. They can frustrate the state’s attempts, but they cannot get the state to do what they might want.<sup>47</sup>

The history of veteran benefits is different. It is a history of an unintended consequence of state action taking on a life of its own, which can be summarized as follows: Originally a group constructed by the ascription of a privileged status to soldiers, veterans retained a sense of entitlement after demobilization, which they reproduced with “the state left out.”<sup>48</sup> Confronted with this new social entity they had never wanted to create, central state actors were not the active, strategizing, engineering force. By contrast, their behavior was reactive, tactical, and resistant to desires voiced by veterans. In fact, the history of veteran benefits is a history of the state finally accommodating a stubborn social, cultural, and psychological reality beyond its control. Fueled by their sense of entitlement, veterans wrote letters upon letters, trying to convince the political leadership that they were indeed citizens deserving of a special status. In the long run, as the veneration of the revolution transmogrified into a “religion of war,” this persistent activism succeeded in convincing the authorities, who began to accept the existence of a social group which the state had never meant to create.<sup>49</sup> Thus, veterans were eventually coopted into the system of status groups constructed by the Soviet state and reciprocated with a loyalty, which in many cases outlived the system that had nurtured them.

This analysis of the transformation of status into entitlement and back into status owes a lot to Fitzpatrick’s oeuvre. Status (that aspect of stratification defined by social esteem and privilege) rather than economic inequality (or “class”)<sup>50</sup> occupied much of her writing in the 1990s. She had become convinced that class analysis was misleading and that the Bolshevik state was at the very center of the Soviet social formation, which she described as a society of state-sponsored status groups.<sup>51</sup> The concept of the entitlement group, by contrast, is more indebted to an earlier incarnation, who might be called the “dissident Fitzpatrick,” the author of *Education and Social Mobility* (1979) and the controversial scholar at the center of the 1986–87 commotion in *Russian Review*.<sup>52</sup> This Fitzpatrick had famously and controversially suggested removing the state from the center of analysis in order to focus attention on social relations outside of it.

The concept of the “entitlement group” assumes that the sense of special worth veterans displayed, once created, was reproduced independent from state discourse—a notion strongly indebted to this earlier Fitzpatrick as much as the notion of “status” is to her later incarnation, the established Fitzpatrick supervising my dissertation at Chicago between 1998 and 2004. The interaction between the entitlement group—an aggregate of poorly connected individuals making similar demands in similar situations—and the Soviet state, which finally led to the institutionalization of *uchastnik voyny*, is a social dynamic quite similar (in kind, not in scope) to the massive process of *vydvizhenie* making the new elite in the 1930s—another of the topics of the earlier Fitzpatrick.<sup>53</sup> Before they were promoted, the future *vydvizhentsy* were not a group in the sense of having collective knowledge of their own social existence. However, ever since the revolution, workers expressed the desire to move up in the world, to live a better life, to—in essence—stop

being workers. At this stage, the future elite existed, as it were, as an “entitlement group.” This collectivity was partially preexisting (workers had desired to move up in the world before 1917 as well), and partially a result of the affirmative action policies for those categorized as “workers.” Already during the Great Break, and even more after executing the old intelligentsia-type Bolsheviks, Stalin catered to these desires, creating a regime of former proletarians, transforming the entitlement group of upwardly mobile laborers into a status group of functionaries. The latter reciprocated with loyalty to Stalin. The Bolsheviks did not need to manufacture these sentiments. They were “already there,” independent of state action. Catering to them, however, did not amount to “Stalinism from below” but to a cooptation of preexisting ambitions to the ends of the regime. The parallels to the history of veterans should be obvious.<sup>54</sup>

The third element of a history of the transformation of entitlement into status is the way most of the interaction of veterans with the state occurred—through public letter-writing and (to a lesser degree) personal supplication. This theme brings us back to the Fitzpatrick of the 1990s—the Fitzpatrick fascinated by new documents emerging from the recently opened archives.<sup>55</sup> Letters not only formed an important part of her source base for *Stalin’s Peasants* (1994), *Everyday Stalinism* (1999), and for a whole series of articles leading to *Tear off the Masks!* (2005). They also became an object of study in themselves. In “Supplicants and Citizens” (1996), Fitzpatrick developed a typology of letters and letter writers.<sup>56</sup>

Citizens wrote letters to the editor or the Politburo to state opinions, criticize policies, suggest improvements, blow the whistle on corrupt officials, point out miscarriages of justice and denounce wrongdoers as their “duty as a citizen,” . . . They used the language of rights and among the rights they implicitly claimed was the right to be heard.<sup>57</sup>

The supplicant, by contrast, was “implicitly a subject rather than a citizen. He sent his private complaints, requests, petitions and confessions to an authority figure imagined as a benevolent father . . . or a patron.”<sup>58</sup> For the most part, veterans were a mixture of the two ideal types. Like supplicants, they were after private gains, complained about their situation, and asked for interventions from above. However, they did so as citizens, in the language of rights. Citizen-soldiers did not ask for a handout, but felt entitled to what they wanted. Leonid Aleksandrovich was such an entitled citizen, who had earned in blood and suffering what he demanded, or so he thought.

## VI. ENTITLEMENT IN ACTION

This essay purports to be about collective action, while public letter writing and supplication are, for the most part, individual practices. Leonid Aleksandrovich went to the military registration office on his own. He alone called the general and he signed his letter single-handedly as well. The archival



record does include collective letters, and some of them have been cited in this essay. However, they form the minority, while the majority are written by individuals and most supplicants likewise came alone. Can such atomized and apparently self-centered efforts constitute “collective action”? They did, because they were mediated by shared sentiment, which functioned to coordinate the activities of otherwise poorly connected individuals. Despite their underdeveloped (and for the first decade after the war absent) formal organization and their rather fluid informal ties, veterans thus often approached the state as a group, a social entity making demands. This sense came to the fore in spontaneous and unexpected mass reactions “from below” to major policy initiatives—the foundation of the SKVV in 1956 was such a moment, as was the discussion of the new constitution in 1977, or the publication of the new status for war participants in 1978. These were collective responses but they were not organized or coordinated by any institution, but by a shared sense of entitlement, which elicited certain reactions in certain situations. Policymakers could ignore or accommodate such sentiments—in an authoritarian polity politicians are not dependent on popular acclaim—but they did not manufacture them. These mass sentiments could also gently push legislators into directions unforeseen in the original policy design. It would surely be misleading, for example, to conclude that the wartime practice of privileging soldiers over civilians or the postwar rhetoric promising a good life after demobilization were meant to engineer a group of veterans insisting on special treatment. They were ad hoc responses to the emergency situation of the war and the crisis of the immediate postwar years. Similarly, the 1977 discussion of the constitution was hardly meant to create a pretext to institutionalize quite costly benefits for war survivors from late 1978 onward. It is more accurate to see the prehistory of this decision as a process where the sudden and unexpected expression of entitlement in the context of the discussion about how Soviet society should be structured was accepted as legitimate by a regime that had increasingly based its rule on the myth of World War II.

## NOTES

1. Research for this essay was made possible by a University of Western Australia Research Grant (UWARG) and an Australian Academy of the Humanities Travelling Fellowship. Earlier drafts were presented at the Committee for Russian and East European Studies, University of Cambridge, UK, February 21, 2006; at the University of Western Australia History Seminar, Perth, Australia, April 12, 2006; and at the Sheila Fitzpatrick Festschrift Conference, Melbourne, Australia, July 4, 2006. I would like to thank all participants in these events for their critical feedback. Thanks also to Andrea Gaynor for expert advice on “the little tactics of the habitat,” and to Debra McDougall for her amused impatience with rambling paragraphs and triple negations (“deutsche Satzstruktur!”) and for pointing out that “hallow” is not the same as “hollow.” Thanks also to the editors and the anonymous readers for their comments and critiques and to Sally Carlton for proof reading yet another draft.

2. Letter to Brezhnev (November 17, 1980), RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 6–12.
3. *SP SSSR* 1978, no. 27, st. 164, p. 540–42.
4. Tat'iana Vladimirovna Chertoritskaia, *Dorogie moi veterany: Iz istorii razrabotki i priniatiia zakonodatel'stva o veteranakh* (St. Petersburg: Glagol', 1995), 21.
5. Chertoritskaia, *Dorogie moi veterany*, 13–15, 21–25, 45–46.
6. See collective letter to central committee by 16 former war correspondents (November 30, 1980), RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 2–4, here: 2.
7. RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 7.
8. RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 8–9.
9. RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 9.
10. RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 9–10.
11. RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 11–12.
12. RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 2–4, 16–18.
13. A. Epishev to CC CPSU (6 February 1981), RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 20–21.
14. Head of Propaganda Department of CC CPSU E. Tiazhel'nikov to Central Committee CPSU (7 May 1981), RGANI f. 5, op. 77, d. 143, l. 22.
15. See Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society. 1941–1991* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 8.
16. On the cult of the war see Nina Tumarkin, *The Living & the Dead. The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Bernd Bonwetsch, "‘Ich habe an einem völlig anderen Krieg teilgenommen.’ Die Erinnerung an den ‘Großen Vaterländischen Krieg’ in der Sowjetunion," in: *Krieg und Erinnerung. Fallstudien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Helmut Berding, Klaus Heller and Winfried Speitkamp (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 145–68; and Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941–1995. Myth, Memories, and Monuments* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
17. Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time. Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, enlarged and updated ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990); James R. Millar, "The Little Deal: Brezhnev's Contribution to Acquisitive Socialism." *Slavic Review* 44, no. 4 (1985): 694–706.
18. Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980–1987); Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship. The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1990); and Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation. Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).
19. On war experience see E. S. Seniavskaia, 1941–1945. *Frontovoe pokolenie. Istoriko-psikhologicheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow: RAN institut Rossiiskoi istorii, 1995); and Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War. Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006). On self-assertive veterans see Amir Weiner, "The Making of a Dominant Myth: The Second World War and the Construction of Political Identities within the Soviet Polity," *The Russian Review* 55 (1996): 638–60; and id., "Saving Private Ivan: From What, Why, and How?" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 2 (2000): 305–36.
20. "Leningrad gotovitsia k vstreche demobilizovannykh voenov," *Krasnaia zvezda*, 6 July 1945, p. 3.

21. For a pamphlet handed out to demobilized soldiers, listing all the benefits of the existing legislation see Glavnaia voennaia prokuratura Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR (ed.), *Pamiatka demobilizovannym riadovym i serzhantom Krasnoi Armii*. 2nd enlarged ed. (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1946).
22. Carol Jacobson, "The Soviet G.I.'s Bill of Rights," *American Review on the Soviet Union* 7, no. 1 (1945): 56–63; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Social Mobility in the Late Stalin Period: Recruitment into the Intelligentsia and Access to Higher Education, 1945–1953," unpublished ms. 1978; and Mark Edele, "Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945–1955," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 1 (2006): 123–25.
23. Beate Fieseler, "Stimmen aus dem gesellschaftlichen Abseits. Die sowjetrussischen Kriegsinvaliden im 'Taufwetter' der Fünfziger Jahre," *Osteuropa* 52, no. 7 (2002): 945–62; id., "Die Invaliden des 'Grossen Vaterländischen Krieges' der Sowjetunion—eine politische Sozialgeschichte 1941–1991," Habilitationsschrift, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 2003; id., "Arme Sieger. Die Invaliden des Grossen Vaterländischen Krieges," *Osteuropa* 55, no. 4–6 (2005): 207–17; and id. "The Bitter Legacy of the 'Great Patriotic War.' Red Army Disabled Soldiers under Late Stalinism," in: *Late Stalinist Russia. Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed. Juliane Fürst (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 46–61.
24. Edele, "Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group," 125–26; GARF f. A-413, op. 1, d. 2370, l. 57.
25. Cf. James Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1998).
26. Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*; and Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War. The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).
27. See below, section 4.
28. If not noted otherwise, the following paragraph draws on Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War*, Chapter 8.
29. Benedict Anderson "Travel and Traffic: On the Geo-biography of *Imagined Communities*," in his *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 207–29, here: 207 fn. 1.
30. On "groupness" and related terms of analysis see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 19–21. "New social entity" (*novyi sotsium*) is Elena Zubkova's term. See her *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo: politika i povsednevnost' 1945–1953* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2000), 28–37.
31. The following sketch of the history of Soviet veterans' organizations draws heavily on Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War*, Chapter 7, where more documentation can be found.
32. See, for example the proposal for a veterans' organization by Sovinformbiuro's V. Barykin (letter to Andrei Zhdanov, 26 August 1946), RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 391, l. 70–73 and the reaction: G. Aleksandrov to A. Zhdanov, *ibid.*, l. 74–76.
33. This process can be observed, in a nutshell, in the stormy meeting of the section of war invalids, December 26, 1956, GARF f. r-9541, op. 11, d. 49.
34. See, for example, Information on results of work with letters and supplicants in the SKVV, April 1978, GARF f. r-9541, op. 1, d. 1506, l. 34–36.

35. See, for example, the report of the Chairman of the SKVV's revision commission A. Cherepanov on the composition of the organization in the localities, GARF f. r-9541, op. 1, d. 182, l. 213–17.
36. See the shorthand report of SKVV plenum of December 23, 1977, GARF f. r-9541, op. 1, d. 1484.
37. See the reports of *Krasnaia zvezda* regarding letters with proposals to change the draft constitution; June through September 1977. RGANI f. 5, op. 73, d. 122, ll. 20, 31, 36, 46, 47, 53, 56, 57, 71, 74.
38. "Zasedaniia Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR. O proekte konstitutsii (osnovnogo zakona) Soiuza Sovetskikh sotsialisticheskikh respublik i itogakh ego vsenarodnogo obsuzhdeniia. Doklad tovarishcha L. I. Brezhneva na sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR 4 oktiabria 1977g.," *Izvestiia*, 5 October 1977, p. 2–3.
39. For examples see the reports on letters received by various newspapers in 1978: RGANI f. 5, op. 75, d. 250, l. 50; d. 257, l. 8; d. 246, l. 5, 24, 42; d. 257, l. 35, 51.
40. See shorthand report of SKVV Plenum, 23 December 1977, GARF f. r-9541, op. 1, d. 1484, l. 132; and report of meeting of SKVV section secretaries, 20 June 1978, GARF f. r-9541, op. 1, d. 1518, l. 25.
41. Chertoritskaia, *Dorogie moi veterany*, 43–46.
42. Chertoritskaia, *Dorogie moi veterany*, 46, 48–49.
43. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation (January 24, 1995) as quoted by V. Luzherenko, "Plen: tragediia millionov," in: *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina 1941–1945. Voenno-istoricheskie ocherki. Kniga 4: Narod i voina*, ed. V. A. Zolotarev and G. N. Sevost'ianov (Moscow: Nauka, 1999), 193–94.
44. Federal'nyi zakon "O veteranakh" (passed by State Duma on December 16, 1994, signed by President Yeltsin on January 12, 1995), *Sobranie zakonodatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, No. 3 (January 16, 1995), st. 168, pp. 355–79, esp. paragraph 1.z.
45. Compare articles 1.e., 1.z, and 1.i of the 2000 version with the equivalents of the 1995 version. The 2000 version is reprinted in *Sbornik zakonov Rossiiskoi Federatsii: Ukazy, postanovleniia, polozheniia, ofitsial'nye teksty i s izmeneiiami i dopolneniiami* (Moscow, 2002), 252–62.
46. Chertoritskaia, *Dorogie moi veterany*, 44, 46.
47. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); *ibid.*, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews & Other Writings. 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1985); *id.*, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1998); Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia," *Journal of Modern History* 65 (1993): 745–70; *id.*, *Stalin's Peasants. Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution. Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

48. On the ways the entitlement community was reproduced—an aspect ignored in this essay—see Edele, “Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group,” 130–31.
49. “Religion of war” is Aleksandr Shpagin’s term. See Denise Youngblood, *Russian War Films. On the Cinema Front, 1914–2005* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 231–32.
50. For the analytical distinction between status and class as two aspects of social stratification see Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie. Studienausgabe*. 5th, rev. ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990), 177–180 (= vol. 1, pt. 1, Chapter 4).
51. The first essay focusing on the invented, imagined, or constructed nature of class was “L’Usage Bolchévique de la ‘Classe’: Marxisme et Construction de l’Identité Individuelle,” *Actes de la Recherche en Science Sociales* 85 (1990): 70–80; followed by “The Problem of Class Identity in NEP Society,” in: *Russia in the Era of NEP. Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 12–33; and culminating in her 1993 classic “Ascribing Class.” Revised versions now make up part I of her new collection of essays: *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005). See also Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11–12.
52. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union. 1921–1934* (Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002); id. “New Perspectives on Stalinism.” *Russian Review* 45, no. 4 (1986): 357–73, esp. 373; and discussion following this piece in *Russian Review* 45, no. 4 (1986): 375–408; and *ibid.* 46, no. 4 (1987): 379–431.
53. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite,” in: *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NJ and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 149–182. The essay was written in 1978.
54. Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 16 and *passim*.
55. Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!* 7–8.
56. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s.” *Slavic Review* 55, no. 1 (1996): 78–105. A revised version became chapter nine of *Tear Off the Masks!*
57. Fitzpatrick, “Supplicants and Citizens,” 104.
58. Fitzpatrick, “Supplicants and Citizens,” 103.

## CHAPTER 9

# “SHOSTAKOVICH ET AL.” AND *THE IRON CURTAIN*: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOVIET STRATEGY OF CULTURAL CONFRONTATION, 1948–1949

*Kiril Tomoff*

On May 12, 1948, New York moviegoers picked their way through crowds of protestors and counterdemonstrators to watch the new film announced as a “semi-documentary spy drama,” William A. Wellman’s *The Iron Curtain*. As the demonstrators outside came to blows and a few of them were hauled away by police, the film’s audience settled in to what contemporaries trying to present an evenhanded account called a slowly moving drama, “competent enough, carefully photographed and directed.” Based on events that took place in Ottawa in 1945, much of the cloak and dagger story was shot on location in the Canadian capital.<sup>1</sup> It centered around the activities of Igor Gouzenko (played by Dana Andrews), a Soviet cipher clerk stationed in Ottawa who defected to Canada in 1945, taking with him a sheaf of documents that revealed Soviet espionage activities and the participation of Canadians in efforts to uncover the secret of the atom bomb.<sup>2</sup>

Observant members of that first New York audience would have recognized—or would soon come to recognize—a number of tropes common to North American portrayals of the Soviet Union and the cultural clash between the West and the Soviet Union. They would not have been surprised to see the seductive call of capitalism’s material comforts reach Gouzenko’s wife (played by Gene Tierney) in a continuation of a theme that stretched back to one of Hollywood’s first portrayals of Soviets in the West, *Ninotchka* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1939). They would see it again in a more dazzling remake, *Silk Stockings* (Rouben Moulian, 1957) and in countless other cold war films. Certainly the alcoholic and depressed army officer ominously recalled to Moscow would have struck familiar chords.<sup>3</sup> And the film’s dark, shadowy, claustrophobic cinematography was fast becoming a trademark of 20th Century Fox’s crime thriller collaborations with the

FBI,<sup>4</sup> not to mention stock-in-trade for portrayals of the cold, bleak home of communism.

Perhaps less commonplace was the film's soundtrack. Arranged and conducted by Alfred Newman, the score consisted largely of music written by the Soviet Union's most internationally renowned composers: Dmitrii Shostakovich, Sergei Prokofiev, Aram Khachaturian, and Nikolai Miaskovskii. In otherwise bland reviews of the film, the music stood out.<sup>5</sup> Otherwise, the film appears to have paled in comparison to the drama of the events it docu-dramatized and the struggles over whether it could be shown to the public, first in the United States and then in the rest of the world.

Immediately upon his defection, the real-life Gouzenko needed nearly forty hours to convince the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that his story—and the documents he carried with him—were authentic. His defection was the first from a Soviet embassy and the first of any sort after the war. It caused an international media sensation, resulted in twenty Canadian espionage trials and a dozen convictions, gave impetus to J. Edgar Hoover's attack on American leftists, and this episode of defection was later credited with nothing less than starting the cold war.<sup>6</sup> Gouzenko himself went into hiding under an assumed name near Toronto, occasionally making public appearances in a dramatic hood to conceal his appearance. By 1948, he published an account of his defection and collaborated on the film script for 20th Century Fox.<sup>7</sup> Gouzenko's personal story is a dramatic one in which the film *The Iron Curtain* plays only a small role.

The few film historians who have concentrated on *The Iron Curtain* have hailed it as "Hollywood's first Cold War movie" and a "premature anti-communist film," arguing for fresh evaluations of its place in the history of Hollywood's political engagement in the struggle against the Soviet Union and suggesting that the history of its overseas reception indicates the extent to which government officials in Washington sought to mold international taste according to their political agenda.<sup>8</sup> While appreciating the role of the film in such contexts, I suggest that Soviet reactions to the film reveal just as much about Soviet strategies of cultural confrontation in the early cold war. In this chapter, I analyze one particular strategy that the Soviets devised and deployed to fight *The Iron Curtain*. This strategy was one among several, but it is particularly important for our understanding of the post-cold war world because it suggests how significantly the cultural confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union shaped the development of the international economic, cultural, and legal system commonly attributed to post-1989 "globalization" by revealing Soviet participation—through competition—in the Western system from the very beginning of the cold war.<sup>9</sup> To wit, the echoes of *The Iron Curtain* affair can be heard in areas as diverse as the nascent development of jurisprudence regulating content on the Internet, the success of universal copyright conventions, and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. The development of the Soviet strategy for cultural confrontation that was deployed against *The Iron Curtain* first in the

United States and then in Europe reveals a surprising reliance on non-Soviet representatives abroad for the interpretation of the terms of cultural conflict, a high degree of practical flexibility in the pursuit of ideological goals, and a hubristic willingness to engage the West in the West's own terms. Soviet strategies of engagement were crafted largely through the agency of low-ranking Soviet officials and friends from abroad, and they often proved successful in the short term and in the arena of high artistic culture, as was the case in *The Iron Curtain* affair. But accepting the West's terms of conflict eventually proved fatal.

### TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT: HELEN BLACK AND INITIAL OPPOSITION TO *THE IRON CURTAIN*

Soviet officials and representatives had ideological objections to *The Iron Curtain*: it was an anti-Soviet film. They opposed it with political activism, organizing demonstrations against the film in virtually every country in which 20th Century Fox screened it. But the eventually successful Soviet strategy to suppress the film did not depend on these demonstrations. Instead, it hinged on the legal and moral status of the film's use of music written by Soviet composers. Though the composers were credited in the film, their permission, not surprisingly, had never been secured and surely would have been denied. Representatives of the Soviet Union abroad and Soviet *apparatchiki* (bureaucrats) in Moscow sought to suppress the film on the basis of its appropriation of Soviet music. In the United States, these efforts were initially spearheaded by one Helen Black. Soon after Soviet officials learned of the film, Black began directing the first efforts to prevent its release. When those efforts failed, she interpreted for her contacts in Moscow the terms of engagement for this early cold war cultural struggle and crucially helped to shape Soviet strategy.

In 1948 and 1949, Black worked for an institution known in the United States as Preslit Literary Agency, Moscow and in Moscow as Litmuzagentsvo, an affiliate of the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad (VOKS).<sup>10</sup> She imported and distributed literary and musical works supplied to her by VOKS, constituting one of the main conduits of Soviet artistic production into the United States. Black had long been an active proponent of art infused with leftist political ideology, whether or not it was directly connected to the Soviet Union. In the 1920s and early 1930s, she was an active organizer of the leftist literary journal, *The New Masses*, translated Soviet literature for dissemination in the United States, and demonstrated interest in populist musical forms. In fact, she apparently wrote the piano accompaniments in one of the first widely distributed songbooks of so-called "cowboy music," folk music of the American West.<sup>11</sup>

In early April 1948, Black tried to prevent 20th Century Fox from utilizing the music of Soviet composers in the film before its release. She sent urgent telegrams to VOKS starting on April 13, one day after the *New York Times* reported Soviet objections to the film, but her contacts in Moscow struggled



to decipher them.<sup>12</sup> On April 15, 1948, the message finally got through: Black urgently required “a telegram signed by Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Miaskovskii, and Khachaturian . . . [saying] ‘we protest against the use of our music for the film *The Iron Curtain* and request that immediate steps be taken for its withdrawal.’” Black further noted that “in the absence of copyright protection, this telegram is absolutely indispensable for the continuation of efforts to prohibit the use of the music.” Unable to act on its own, the VOKS leadership sent Black’s request to the Communist Party Central Committee and awaited instructions about how to proceed.<sup>13</sup>

Twentieth Century Fox was apparently able to work faster than the Central Committee’s cultural oversight apparatus. Black sent increasingly curt requests ending with another urgent telegram on April 23, this time indicating some irritation that her earlier request had not been fulfilled: “Preslit did not give permission, did not sign a contract, and did not receive money for the Soviet music for the film ‘The Iron Curtain.’ We assume [Fox has] the possibility to turn to ‘Anglo-Soviet Music Press’ with a request for a contract for England and so we urgently advise [you] to warn them about the proposal. The fact that you did not send the requested telegram has made it very difficult for us. Black.”<sup>14</sup>

Black’s irritated tone when addressing leaders in Moscow is strikingly dissimilar from that typical of bureaucrats in the Central Committee apparatus or domestic cultural institutions. That she adopted it suggests that in 1948 at least, non-Soviet citizens representing the Soviet Union’s cultural interests in their own countries were not acculturated in the manners and practices of Soviet domestic cultural politics. It gives the impression that early in the cold war, leaders in Moscow had less control over their representatives abroad than we might suppose.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, this lack of control extended beyond oddity of tone. Black eventually tutored Soviet officialdom on how to engage the West in general—and U.S. film studios in particular—in international cultural competition. The day after that first New York showing of the film, she penned a final letter explaining her efforts to prevent 20th Century Fox from using Soviet composers’ music.<sup>16</sup> Black apparently undertook that effort entirely on her own, without instruction or even (irritatingly for her) support from Moscow. She only explained her activities to Moscow after this first fight was lost.

According to Black, Hollywood film studios regularly utilized published music by employing agents to hunt down music to fit specific cinematic purposes. Very occasionally, the agents’ jobs were simplified when the studio already had specific pieces in mind, as with *The Iron Curtain*. The normal practice for acquiring the rights to such music entailed contacting the music’s publisher and negotiating terms of compensation for its use. The publisher would grant the studio a “patent” to use specific excerpts and collect the agreed payment.

In the case of *The Iron Curtain*, a 20th Century Fox music acquisition agent contacted Leeds, a large music publisher, sometime in late 1947 or early 1948 to negotiate terms to use significant excerpts from several Soviet

composers' works for a new, unnamed film project.<sup>17</sup> Black had earlier concluded a music distribution agreement with Leeds, so from her perspective this was indeed the proper channel. Based on the agent's description, Leeds proposed a hypothetical sum of \$10,000 for the "patent," a sum that Fox rejected, noting that the absence of bilateral copyright agreements between the Soviet Union and United States meant that Soviet music was not protected by U.S. copyright law. Since the music was legally in the public domain and could be acquired elsewhere, Fox countered with an offer of \$3000.<sup>18</sup> No agreement was made.

When Black later ascertained the nature of the film in which the music would sound, she informed Leeds that she was sure Soviet composers would object to this use of their music. Not wanting to appear driven by "political" motivations, Leeds requested from Black a telegram from the composers stating their opposition. The telegram was to counter Fox's claims in the American press that it had an agreement with Leeds and paid to use the music (Fox reported agreeing to the \$10,000 sum, which Leeds, and Black, continued to deny).<sup>19</sup> Black again expressed her annoyance at not having received the requested telegram.

Having heard from Fox that it intended to use the music with or without the "patent" from Leeds, Black hired a Hollywood lawyer to evaluate Fox's legal claims. She was informed that Fox was probably right; however, Fox approached Leeds with another offer for the patent, this time for \$12,000. Black's lawyer indicated that the studio appeared to be nervous, not about the film's U.S. release but about its prospects overseas. In fact, a Fox lawyer apparently informed the head of Fox studios that though their case was strong in legal terms, practical application of the legal theory even in the United States was not assured.<sup>20</sup> Leeds declined to provide the "patent," but the film was released anyway.

Black noted that the use of Soviet music in American film could only truly be controlled through a reciprocal copyright agreement with the U.S. government. An intermediary possibility—an institution-to-institution agreement between the Soviet Composers' Union and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP)—might provide Soviet composers some legal protections and an ally, but was unlikely because the Soviet Union did not pay royalties to ASCAP composers when their music was used in the USSR and ASCAP was therefore leery about concluding any such agreement.<sup>21</sup>

At this point, Black's active role in Soviet efforts to suppress *The Iron Curtain* apparently ended. She had not prevented 20th Century Fox from utilizing the music, thwarted by the slow-moving Soviet bureaucracy's inability to produce her requested telegram and, more decisively, by Fox's confidence in their legal standing. The Black episode demonstrates that in 1948, cultural competition in the United States was carried out in large and significant part by Americans, not as manipulated agents of a ubiquitous Soviet apparatus but rather as ideologically committed but self-sufficient individuals. Black directed the struggle against *The Iron Curtain* without

the support of her Soviet contacts and without the benefit of a concerted cultural strategy. In fact, as we shall see, her explanatory letter played a crucial role in changing Soviet strategy to combat the film more successfully in Europe.

### THE FIRST LEGAL CHALLENGE: CHARLES RECHT AND SHOSTAKOVICH ET AL. V. 20TH CENTURY FOX

In the United States, Soviet opposition to *The Iron Curtain* after its release switched to the official diplomatic establishment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID), and its efforts to fight the film in American courts. The Soviet position was argued by an American with long-standing ties to the Soviet Union, Charles Recht. Recht's legal strategy and the eventual judgment placed *The Iron Curtain* and the composers whose music it appropriated at the center of a long-term development with global significance: the international legal standardization of intellectual property rights and the global diffusion of artistic production.

I think that MID took control of the struggle to suppress *The Iron Curtain* after Black's failure for two reasons: the document trail containing Black's reports eventually ended at MID, and Charles Recht represented the interests of the composers in the subsequent legal fight. The Czech-born Recht was a prominent advocate for World War I-era pacifists and radicals. More to the point, he was the official representative of the Soviet Union in the United States from 1921 until U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union led to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1933. Recht continued to represent Soviet institutions and individuals in U.S. courts until his death in 1965.<sup>22</sup>

Recht filed a four-part application for injunction with the New York Supreme Court that was heard on June 7, 1948.<sup>23</sup> First, he sought to prevent 20th Century Fox from using Soviet composers' names and music in the film and any advertising simply because they objected to such use. Second, he charged that by using Soviet-composed music in an anti-Soviet film, the studio had committed libel and violated U.S. Civil Rights Law, so the music should be withdrawn and compensation awarded to the composers. Third and fourth, he accused the studio of "deliberate infliction of injury without just cause" and violation of the composers' moral rights.<sup>24</sup> Recht stipulated that the music was not protected by U.S. copyright law and was, therefore, in the public domain. However, he sought to show that *The Iron Curtain* was an anti-Soviet film and that using Shostakovich et al.'s music indicated their "approval, endorsement and participation therein thereby casting upon them 'the false imputation of being disloyal to their country.'" This argument hinged on the contention that using the composers' names and music "necessarily implies their consent, approval or collaboration in the production and distribution of the picture because 'the public at large knows that living composers receive payment for the use of their names and creations in films.'" <sup>25</sup>

The court ruled in favor of 20th Century Fox, denying Recht's motion "in all respects." The court's reasoning spelled out the status of several theoretical components of the U.S. system to provide legal protections for intellectual property and set the stage for a shift in Soviet cultural confrontation strategies, and its opposition to the film. The decision hinged primarily on the fact that Soviet composers' music was in the public domain. The court ruled that "the lack of copyright protection has long been held to permit others to use the names of authors in copying, publishing or compiling their works." Following the precedent set by an earlier decision to allow sale of a dress copied from an original, but noncopyrighted, pattern, the presiding judge denied the motion to enjoin use of the composers' names in the credits and marketing for the film.<sup>26</sup>

The issue of libel required a bit more of his attention. The judge recognized the hypothetical possibility that the court could, in a clear case of libel, grant injunctive relief to "restrain the publication of alleged libelous matter." But Recht's arguments hinged on the contention that use of names and music "necessarily implies" collaboration. The judge rejected the "necessary implication" on the grounds that work in the public domain can be used without consulting its authors. Again, lack of copyright protection rendered charges of libel unwarranted.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, the judge took the final two points together, suggesting that the only possible "willful injury" the studio could have inflicted was to affiliate the composers with a "moving picture whose theme is objectionable to them in that it is unsympathetic to their political ideology." Willful injury, according to this logic, led directly to the doctrine of moral right. The presiding judge suggested that the doctrine of moral right, if it existed at all in American law, would only apply if the compositions had been distorted. They had not been. Furthermore, notwithstanding the theoretical possibility of restraining reproduction of noncopyrighted work on the basis of the doctrine of moral right, the judge noted that in practice to do so would violate better established American legal protections for those using work in the public domain.<sup>28</sup> Lack of copyright protection was decisive again, but here, the implication of the judge's ruling was that in a system of regulating intellectual property rights that privileged authors' moral rights over the public's access to works in the public domain, the opposite ruling could apply. When the decision was upheld on appeal in March 1949, the presiding judge's logic was affirmed.<sup>29</sup> This implication would prove momentous for the film's fortunes abroad.

Helen Black indicated that 20th Century Fox was unlikely to lose a legal fight with Soviet interests in the United States. It is no surprise that she was right. Soviet efforts to stop release of the film in the United States were bound to fail. Black's efforts, however, reveal that in 1948 Soviet cultural officials relied on their contacts abroad not just to execute policies of cultural confrontation but to construct those policies and even to interpret the terms of engagement for them, in effect translating conditions in the West into policy recommendations. Charles Recht's involvement articulated Soviet

“moral” opposition to the use of its composers’ music in an ideologically anti-Soviet film. Recht may have lost the legal battle in the United States, but his arguments, the judge’s findings, and Black’s policy suggestions set the stage for a new struggle in Europe in which Soviet strategy changed to combine copyright protection, intellectual property rights and regulations, and a new agreement to disseminate its composers’ works abroad.

### CHANGING STRATEGY: CHANT DU MONDE AND *LE RIDEAU DE FER*

If Soviet opposition to *The Iron Curtain* in the United States proved ineffective, such was not to be the case in Europe, especially France. While the hopeless struggle was still being waged in American courts, Soviet officials in Moscow and Paris adjusted their strategy. The new strategy responded to Helen Black’s recommendations and followed her suggestions to remedy the fatal flaw in the Soviet position in the United States: lack of copyright protection for Soviet musical works.<sup>30</sup>

In what must have been an almost immediate reaction to Helen Black’s last letter, the head of VOKS, V. S. Kemenov, penned a proposal that constituted a change in Soviet strategy and sent it to MID on April 29, 1948. Kemenov suggested transferring publication and distribution rights for Soviet music in France, its colonies, Italy, Switzerland, and Luxembourg to the French publishing house Chant du Monde. This publishing house was closely affiliated with the French Communist Party and an obvious ally for Soviet cultural interests in Western Europe, but Kemenov’s justification for the transfer of copyright referred directly to *The Iron Curtain*:

Right now, this question has taken on an especially urgent and important character. Showings of the anti-Soviet film “Iron Curtain” are planned for the immediate future in France. Since the music of Soviet composers has been used in this picture, it may be possible to suppress its exhibition, given an agreement with the firm Chant du Monde, about which we were informed by the representative of VOKS in France and the director of the firm, Jouvenel (a communist).<sup>31</sup>

Kemenov concluded with a short proposal that sketched the general contours of an agreement with Chant du Monde.<sup>32</sup> Kemenov thus made transfer of copyright the primary strategy for suppressing *The Iron Curtain* in France, and suppressing *The Iron Curtain* was the only justification for transferring copyright for Soviet music to a French publisher, a justification that apparently precluded even a detailed contract.

But what of the role of this Jouvenel? Reno de Jouvenel was a journalist and, as Kemenov noted, director of the firm Chant du Monde. Like Helen Black, he was friendly to the Soviet Union and sympathetic to its cultural position. Unlike Helen Black, he was not already a main conduit for the distribution of Soviet artistic production in France. That post was filled by

one Godunov, the unnamed VOKS representative mentioned by Kemenov in the memo quoted above. Jouvenel stood to capitalize on a change in strategy that transferred Soviet composers' intellectual property rights to a French firm, that is, his. Like Black, he had the expertise but not the authority to suggest strategy, but subsequent communications demonstrate that as the release of *The Iron Curtain* in France approached, Black's strategic advice became more central to Kemenov's policy justifications than Jouvenel's self-interested assurances.

The reaction of MID was not the speedy permission to proceed for which Kemenov hoped. Instead, it suggests the high degree of caution that top officials exercised when discussing even seemingly minor cultural agreements with foreign firms in the early cold war, especially in the wake of the K-R Affair and during the buildup to the larger antic cosmopolitan campaigns and their wild attacks on foreign contacts.<sup>33</sup> The assistant minister of foreign affairs, A. Ia. Vyshinskii had no objections in principle to Kemenov's proposal. However, he did prevent Kemenov from acting quickly because of three technical objections, two of which distanced his diplomatic corps from participating in the proposal. The first objection was the most cursory and least significant: Kemenov should draft a complete contract proposal with specific terms before seeking higher governmental permission. The other two objections showed Vyshinskii's hesitance to take responsibility for transferring Soviet intellectual property rights to a foreign entity: he doubted MID's authority to sign off on the proposal without an official act of government, and he suggested that someone in the Soviet Union's trade mission in Paris would be a more appropriate Soviet signatory than anyone in (his) embassy.<sup>34</sup>

It took a week for Kemenov to respond, during which time he ascertained that crafting a permanent agreement with Chant du Monde could take a very long time. But time was of the essence, so he requested permission to enter into a temporary pact with the French firm. This time, he included the draft text of a short memorandum of agreement that spelled out royalties rates, term (six months, with a more permanent agreement to follow), and mutual obligations. The proposed obligations are particularly interesting because the agreement would have obligated Chant du Monde "to take timely measures to preserve [Soviet composers'] rights in accordance with French law and to stand in the way of every violation of the law that might be committed in connection with the musical works of Soviet composers."<sup>35</sup> Though obliquely, the effort to suppress *The Iron Curtain* was to be written into the contract itself.

Kemenov's second request also brings Helen Black back into the story. Quoting extensively from Black's letter of April 23, Kemenov reported that 20th Century Fox apparently feared that a legal challenge to the film on the basis of its appropriation of Soviet music could succeed in France. Black's conclusion was heavily emphasized in the copy of Kemenov's memo that was eventually deposited in the party's cultural oversight department archives.<sup>36</sup> Kemenov was apparently not the only high-ranking official who placed

significant stock in the conclusions of those representing Soviet interests in the West. Black, buttressed by Jouvenel and translated by Kemenov, was effectively altering a Soviet strategy of cultural confrontation as it was formulated in Moscow.

Kemenov's second proposal failed as well. Chant du Monde would not agree to a mere six-month agreement and countered with a proposal to establish a three-year pact, otherwise keeping the terms.<sup>37</sup> And Vyshinskii continued to distance himself from technically participating in the agreement. Again, he did not object in principle but insisted that Kemenov put the proposal up for an official act of government.<sup>38</sup> On May 31, Kemenov did, summarizing the terms of the proposed three-year contract (in which Chant du Monde would also get the rights to Soviet music in Belgium and the Netherlands), noting the support of the Soviet ambassador to France (Bogomolov) and Vyshinskii's lack of objection, and—to explain the expedited decision he hoped for—Helen Black's analysis of 20th Century Fox and its fears for the film in France.<sup>39</sup>

Then, on the first two days of June, events in Paris transformed Vyshinskii's equivocation into outright support for an agreement between VOKS and Chant du Monde, to be concluded as quickly as possible. On June 1, the newspaper *Figaro* announced a private showing of *The Iron Curtain* in a Parisian cinema. Though the exhibition was called off at the last moment "for technical reasons," Jouvenel reported to his VOKS contact in Paris that a few copies of the film had already made their way into France. The official opening had not been announced, but it could happen any day. Ambassador Bogomolov urgently requested that the agreement with Chant du Monde be concluded quickly.<sup>40</sup> Vyshinskii suddenly agreed that time was of the essence.

Armed with Vyshinskii's belated order to hurry things up, Kemenov sprang into action, contacting the VOKS representative in Paris to begin final negotiations with Chant du Monde. The publishing company suggested a contract with no time limit that could be cancelled at either party's request.<sup>41</sup> Representatives of Chant du Monde undoubtedly sensed, even fostered, their Soviet counterparts' anxiety about the imminent French release of *The Iron Curtain* and used the perception of crisis to turn an original six-month proposal into an unlimited agreement in which the French firm would control rights to Soviet music in much of Western Europe and all of the French colonial empire. To underscore the point: according to this latest proposal, Chant du Monde would be obligated to defend Soviet interests against any legal infringement, "including use [of Soviet composers' work] without their permission in films of an anti-Soviet nature."<sup>42</sup> Kemenov obtained permission to proceed from high-ranking politicians, A. N. Kosygin and M. A. Suslov.<sup>43</sup> He checked every subsequent step with Voroshilov, who in turn sought opinions from subordinates, like the minister of finance.<sup>44</sup> Finally, Kemenov agreed to have someone from the Soviet trade mission, not the embassy, represent VOKS in the contract.<sup>45</sup> The fast track worked, and the agreement was signed on June 12.<sup>46</sup>

Once the agreement had been signed and copyright transferred, all that remained to determine the success or failure of the new strategy in France was for Chant du Monde to attempt to suppress *The Iron Curtain*. The opportunity arose nearly a year later, in June and early July 1949. *The Iron Curtain* opened at l'Avenue cinema on June 16, 1949 with the announcement that "the eyes of the world are fixed on *The Iron Curtain*."<sup>47</sup> As in New York, Belgium, and Italy, the film was greeted by an audience and a protesting crowd. The French-Soviet Friendship Society called on "republicans and democrats" to protest the presentation of the anti-Soviet film to French audiences, and the call was answered. The showing was twice interrupted and could continue only when policemen had been stationed at the theater. One protestor was arrested and later released.<sup>48</sup> As they had in Belgium and Italy, the protests continued beyond the first showing. On June 18 or 19, a group of protestors shouted over the film, halting it again. Several were arrested and later all but one (who was held for assaulting an officer) were released. At this point, *The Iron Curtain* controversy in France reached parliament, when one of its communist members (Fernand Grenier) called for an investigation about how and why the film was allowed to be shown.<sup>49</sup> The protests continued. On June 21, six more protestors were arrested and two of them incarcerated, and the next day, the protests climaxed when Grenier called on Parisians to shut down the film themselves and then led fifteen colleagues to the theater, where they led another demonstration that stopped the showing of the film. The protestors, including the communist deputies, harangued the audience, and once again, some were arrested.<sup>50</sup>

Further protests were no longer reported by *Le Monde*, but the film played on at l'Avenue.<sup>51</sup> The protests had certainly raised awareness of the film, forcing it into the newspapers alongside analysis of "the German Question" and the ongoing revolution in China, rumblings about trouble in Vietnam, and reports from the tennis championships at Wimbledon. But the protests had not prevented 20th Century Fox from showing *The Iron Curtain* to Parisian audiences. In fact, two weeks later, l'Avenue exhorted readers of *Le Monde* to see what the fuss was about and see the film as it entered its fourth week.<sup>52</sup> They would not have long to do so.

On July 7, Paris police shut down the film and seized all copies, not because of the protests outside the theater, but for "musical plagiarism."<sup>53</sup> As we know, there was no question of plagiarism, properly defined. The music had been reproduced accurately and credited correctly. At issue were Chant du Monde's intellectual property rights and the legal status of the composers' copyright and attendant "moral rights." The confiscation of the film was a response to a case filed by the publisher, the final step in the shift in Soviet strategy to oppose the film and the culmination of the course of action originally suggested by Helen Black.

On May 31, 1950, it appeared that strategy would backfire. A lower court found in favor of 20th Century Fox, overturned the police's seizure of the film, and held Chant du Monde liable for some \$9,000 (3 million francs to Fox and half a million to the owner of l'Avenue) in damages. But Chant du



Monde appealed, and in 1953, found a more receptive audience in the Paris Court of Appeals, which overturned the lower court.<sup>54</sup>

The appellate court's reasoning hinged on several points. First, it recognized Chant du Monde as the holder of the relevant intellectual property rights, validating the transfer of copyright protection from VOKS to the French publisher. Second, it recognized Chant du Monde's rights to enforce its intellectual property claims in France according to French law, regardless of the status of the Soviet Union or its nationals with respect to international copyright conventions, noting that those rights could not be enforced only if French law explicitly excluded them from protection. This finding meant that the French copyright law of July 19, 1793, a law with far stronger protections for authors' intellectual property rights than in the Anglo-American tradition, applied to the *Iron Curtain* case. Third, it noted that the music of Soviet composers had without doubt been used in the film without the permission and contrary to the wishes of those composers and found that Chant du Monde's request to withdraw the film was therefore legal. Twentieth Century Fox was forced to pay 2 million francs (\$5,000), and the film was suppressed once and for all.<sup>55</sup> Belatedly, the strategy had worked.

### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AT HOME AND ABROAD: AGENCY, GLOBAL INTEGRATION, AND THE SOVIET COLLAPSE

Readers have no doubt noted that this fight for Soviet composers' "moral rights" abroad contains absolutely no record of those individuals' participation in the struggle or their opinions about it. There is almost no evidence that any of the four composers named in the lawsuit filed under their name by Charles Recht even knew about it, much less participated in it. Helen Black's request for a telegram stating the composers' objection to the film went to VOKS, but nowhere in the following correspondence is there any mention of an attempt to enlist their actual support. In a system in which composers' names were routinely signed to statements they did not actually make, this should come as no great surprise.<sup>56</sup> In international cultural competition, prominent composers could certainly be agents of Soviet policy, traveling abroad, forming and reporting professional impressions, and speaking on behalf of the Soviet cultural system. But they, their names, their reputations, and their music could also be mere tools for others to utilize in their own struggles, as appears to have been the case here.

This irony—an international legal struggle to protect composers' "moral rights" without any record of those composers' opinions about the use of their music—raises the question of the status of intellectual property within the Soviet Union and the relationship between the domestic and the international with regard to Soviet intellectual property. The answer to this question turns out to be a complex one.

After the war, Soviet cultural elites pushed for a significant shift toward professionally determined and sanctioned methods of setting the value of

artistic labor. This shift was apparent in competing conceptions of justifiable and legitimate royalties earnings. It turned primarily on the relative value of translators' work in the literary sphere and pitted officials from the All-USSR Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS) and Ministry of Finance against the professional leadership of the creative unions, especially the Writers' Union and Composers' Union. At stake were the graduated pay scale for royalties generated primarily by theater, opera, and ballet performances and the status of long-term residuals for works that were especially popular with Soviet audiences.

The royalties system that was established in 1928 and remained more or less in force through the Stalin period privileged the amount of labor required to produce literary or musical work. The longer the novel, the more acts the play, the higher its writer's compensation. According to this system, translators and stage adaptors could earn royalties at the same rates as playwrights and composers producing original work. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the functional equivalency of translation and original composition was under attack by the creative union leadership. During these struggles, professional composers and writers introduced intellectual property as a legitimate basis for compensation while arguing to reduce royalties for translations and defending indefinite residuals. By the end of the Stalin period, these arguments had been successful enough to enter into drafts for new copyright and royalties legislation that were prepared by the Ministry of Culture, even over the objections of the Ministry of Finance and the VTsSPS.<sup>57</sup> As the Soviet cultural elite became more deeply ensconced in material privilege at home, conceptions of legitimate compensation for creative work devalued labor and privileged intellectual property.

So intellectual property became increasingly important in domestic Soviet cultural life after the war. It also raised the issue of how the Soviet system to compensate artistic production should extend to art produced abroad. This issue had two components: how should the Soviet Union compensate foreigners for work used or sold in the Soviet Union, and how, or under what circumstances, should the Soviet Union seek to protect Soviet works abroad? Initially, these issues were treated separately. At the upper reaches of the arts administration, the Central Committee apparatus, the first was treated as a nuisance to be resolved with the least cost to the Soviet economy.<sup>58</sup> The second was ignored almost entirely, until *The Iron Curtain* demonstrated the potential political and strategic value of taking intellectual property seriously on a global scale.

When Soviet cultural policymakers engaged 20th Century Fox over *The Iron Curtain*, they jumped into a fast-changing system of regulating copyright internationally. Copyright emerged along with the nineteenth-century expansion in book publication and was always inextricably tied to market capitalism, tying together notions of intellectual creativity, private property rights, and—through royalties systems—remuneration for creative or intellectual work.<sup>59</sup> Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, states and publishing companies alike sought to standardize copyright protections, primarily

as a lubricant to international trade in the material product of ideas, books. Policymakers were also motivated by a desire to secure reciprocal protections for their citizens in other states. Their efforts led to the establishment in 1886 of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, a systematic agreement originally signed by only ten countries that remains the fundamental basis of international copyright agreements today. But markedly different national conventions proved difficult to standardize in an international system of copyright, and a few major powers, including the United States and Russia, refused to accept the Berne Convention, preferring bilateral reciprocity agreements.<sup>60</sup>

After World War II, the fledgling United Nations, through UNESCO, directed a concerted effort to construct a “universal republic of letters” as part of the emerging postwar capitalist system. Culminating in the 1952 Universal Copyright Convention (UCC), this effort created a common regime of copyright relations that supplemented the Berne Convention and allowed those whose domestic copyright protections still did not fulfill the requirements of the Berne Convention nevertheless to enter into a common system of regulations.<sup>61</sup> It was only with the advent of the UCC after the beginning of the cold war that the United States acceded to this system of international copyright regulation.

The Soviet Union remained outside it. However, Soviet cultural competition with the West put Soviet officials and artists in contact with this nascent copyright regime. Typical for the U.S.-dominated global economy, this regime was dominated by the West and encompassed most of the emerging postcolonial world. The agreement between VOKS and Chant du Monde coopted the Soviet Union into this international copyright regime and left the intellectual property rights of Soviet composers in the hands of a French publisher for perpetuity.<sup>62</sup>

Soviet participation in the emergent global copyright system was finally systematized in 1973, when the Soviet Union joined the UCC. Though it had long been eagerly awaited by Western publishers hoping to capitalize on enormous Soviet book sales, this event evoked a nervous, typically cold war response in the West, twenty-five years after *The Iron Curtain* affair. Emigres and dissidents wrote opinion pieces and open letters to the American press warning about the possible uses of international copyright to extend Soviet censorship policies to a global scale, silence *samizdat* (underground self-publication) and *tamizdat* (unsanctioned publication abroad), and kill Russian literary culture. Slavists took to Congress to counteract the possible threat.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps that was the strategy in Brezhnev’s Soviet Union, and *The Iron Curtain* affair shows that those fearing Soviet abilities to manipulate international copyright laws for competitive advantage had a record to rely on. But in the event, the global spread of Soviet censorship never materialized.<sup>64</sup>

In hindsight, this should not surprise us. It fits a much larger pattern in which Soviet leaders publically accepted the terms of competition, especially economic competition, proposed by the West. Assuming the grand march

of history was on their side, Soviet leaders promised to outproduce the West and confidently awaited the collapse of the capitalist system.<sup>65</sup> Instead, they saw their own economy stagnate and drift toward collapse. One of the most frequently proposed explanations for the collapse of the Soviet Union is that the Communist Party lost the active participation of its population and its subsequent ability and desire to continue the cold war struggle because the Soviet system could not deliver on its leaders' promises to construct a scientifically planned economy that would outproduce the capitalist West, including in consumer goods. Those promises, I suspect, had at least two roots. The first was a heartfelt ideological belief in the superiority of a command economy that Soviet leaders universally shared and which I have not addressed here. The second was success competing with the West on the West's own terms in the arena in which direct confrontation (not diplomatic negotiation or ideological grandstanding) took place earliest on in the cold war—culture and especially high musical culture.<sup>66</sup> The struggle to preserve the "moral rights" of Soviet composers during the confrontation over *The Iron Curtain* reveals this tendency and demonstrates its short-term success.

The story of the Soviet effort to suppress *Iron Curtain* remains relevant today, as the post-cold war international legal system continues to grapple with issues of intellectual property and copyright. The divergent outcomes of the two legal challenges forwarded in the name of the Soviet composers whose music animated *The Iron Curtain* point to tensions within the international legal regime for regulating intellectual property that remain. Failure in the United States and success in France was partly a result of the Soviet strategy shift described here, which immeasurably strengthened the case for the challenge in France. But the differing weights in American and French legal systems for "moral" rights of the authors were also essential to Chant du Monde's victory in the Paris Court of Appeals.<sup>67</sup> This tension and the *Iron Curtain* legal battles remain current as legal scholars and jurists seek to iron out principles of legal regulation of intellectual property and the Internet, and as popular musicians seek to prevent security agencies from using their music for purposes that contradict their original intent, like torture.<sup>68</sup> Like those who sued in the names of "Shostakovich, et al." in the early days of the cold war, Rage Against the Machine and other contemporary performers may turn to the courts and "moral rights" to try to control how their music is used during a new international conflict.

The *Iron Curtain* affair also suggests something about patterns in the development of Stalinist policymaking in the cultural sphere. In 1976, *Slavic Review* published an article by Sheila Fitzpatrick that challenged one of the then central orthodoxies of Western interpretations of Soviet cultural life. In her reassessment of politics and culture under Stalin, Fitzpatrick argued that Soviet cultural life could not be fully understood by focusing exclusively on the Communist Party's (and Stalin's) drive to control cultural production by subjugating artists, writers, musicians, and the like to strict control. Instead, she noted that after the Cultural Revolution, the authorities (usually loyal

noncommunists, like Maksim Gorky in literature) who helped set cultural orthodoxies that the party sought to enforce were determined “through negotiation between professions, cultural bureaucrats, and, in some cases, the party leadership.” In fact, Fitzpatrick explained, the cultural intelligentsia under Stalin was a privileged group, with the status, material advantage, and access to political elites that made them an integral part of “Soviet high society.” Rather than strictly bowing to ruthless political domination, the cultural intelligentsia, Fitzpatrick suggested, retained cultural authority and may even have assimilated the party to its values as much as the other way around.<sup>69</sup>

For Fitzpatrick, the crucial years for setting Stalinist cultural orthodoxies in the arts were 1935 to 1939, when an old Soviet elite was replaced by a new one, trained during the Cultural Revolution. In the sciences, the crucial years were the postwar 1940s.<sup>70</sup> While Helen Black certainly should not be considered a latter day Gorky for cultural competition abroad, the *Iron Curtain* affair shows that at the very beginning of the cold war, Stalinist cultural policymakers again turned to outsiders, like Black, who were willing to lend their expertise and energies to the Soviet cause by interpreting for their contacts in Moscow the relatively new terrain they encountered. This similarity suggests a structural continuity between the Stalinism of the years leading up to and including the Great Terror and that of the early cold war years, when the Soviets were imposing control on the countries of Eastern Europe. Even as they violently asserted exclusionary control in high politics, the Stalinist leadership depended on relative outsiders (sympathetic ones) to forge policies in the cultural sphere. This pattern was established domestically in the 1930s and seems to have been repeated internationally after 1948.

Another conclusion prompted by one of Fitzpatrick’s more recent programmatic observations can be drawn from how the eventually successful Soviet strategy for shutting down the first American cold war film in Europe was essentially devised by a sympathetic New Yorker in the employ of the Soviet book and musical score distribution service. In 2004, Fitzpatrick suggested that conclusions about Stalinist politics might be drawn by shifting the questions asked of material that interests cultural, social, and intellectual historians.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the *Iron Curtain* affair is relevant to those interested in Stalinist policymaking. Black’s contacts in Moscow and counterparts in Paris worked out the details and, with the approval of Soviet foreign policy leaders, party officials, and government decrees, implemented it. In a hypercentralized political system, the influence of such a minor figure, and a non-Soviet, on policy formation may seem surprising. However, the role of Helen Black here is perfectly consistent with Soviet decision-making in other spheres. Soviet decision-making was highly centralized, yes, but with centralization came a similarly high level of delegation, not just for implementation but for policy formation itself.

After the war, expertise became increasingly important in Soviet governance in general.<sup>72</sup> The Central Committee apparatus underwent significant

professionalization and the bureaucrats who inhabited it increasingly relied on the expert opinions of those who reported to them.<sup>73</sup> Equilibrium based on division of labor and responsibilities emerged within Stalin's top leadership circles.<sup>74</sup> As a result, policy decisions were routinely formed relatively low in the Soviet hierarchy, presented as proposals with supporting evidence. The Secretariat, the Politburo, and the Council of Ministers almost always either stamped those policies with their approval or chose from a preselected, limited number of specific policy formulations accompanied by succinct reports. Extreme delegation and the rising importance of expertise gave those outside of these top leadership bodies significant influence over the development of Soviet policy. This is not to say they could control it, and in fact their jobs and personal security depended on their immediate superiors' perceptions of their ideological reliability, fitness for the job, and loyalty. The pressures constricting all Soviet officials were obviously intense and recognizing individuals' possibilities to influence policy is not meant to minimize these pressures.

In my study of the Soviet Composers' Union, I proposed the notion of "agency" as an intermediary concept between "subjugation" and "autonomy" that can help capture, at least for elite professionals like members of the Composers' Union, this possibility to effect change within a highly restricted environment. This notion was developed under Fitzpatrick's guidance and with her encouragement, especially during our discussions of her penetrating and productive critiques of my dissertation. In it, I see the influence of her interest in the study of Soviet history "from below" and especially in the strategies that ordinary citizens developed to improve their lots in Soviet society.<sup>75</sup> One of my goals for this conclusion is to test the applicability of the notion of "agency" developed in my *Creative Union* in a new context, one in which elite professionals were not directly involved. The roles of Helen Black and Kemenov in shutting down *The Iron Curtain* provide further examples of the importance of "agency" to understanding how Soviet cultural policy was formed, even for competition on the international stage.

## NOTES

1. Harry Brand, "Vital Statistics Concerning *The Iron Curtain*," typescript production notes provided to the author by 20th Century Fox. Brand noted that the film took thirty-five days to shoot; ten were spent in Ottawa (p. 2), where both leads suffered frostbitten toes (p. 6).
2. Brand; *Monthly Film Bulletin* 15, no. 175 (July 1948): 96; John Rossi, "*The Iron Curtain*: A Premature Anti-Communist Film," *Film and History* 24, no. 3-4 (1994): 100-12, here 104, 106.
3. *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 96.
4. On the stylistic similarities and intention to evoke the FBI collaborations (and early on, actually to collaborate with the FBI), see D. J. Leab, "'Iron Curtain': Hollywood's First Cold War Movie," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 1988, no. 8: 153-88; and Rossi.
5. *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 96.

6. For a concise synopsis of the media attention surrounding Gouzenko in the decades after his defection, see clips from the archives of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, [http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-71-72/conflict\\_war/gouzenko/](http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-71-72/conflict_war/gouzenko/), accessed 9 May 2006. The Gouzenko defection and its ramifications are also the subject of Amy Knight, *How the Cold War Began: The Gouzenko Defection and the Hunt for Soviet Spies* (Toronto: M&S, 2005).
7. Igor Gouzenko, *The Iron Curtain* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1948); Gouzenko, *This Was My Choice* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1948).
8. Rossi; Leab. See also Paul Swann, "International conspiracy in and around The Iron Curtain," *Velvet Light Trap* (Spring 1995): 52(9). *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Thomson Gale. UC Riverside (CDL). 14 March 2006 <http://find.gale-group.com/itx/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T002&prodID=EAIM&docId=A90190425&source=gale&srcprod=EAIM&serGropuName=ucriverside&version=1.0>.
9. The literature on globalization is immense, diverse, and contested. However, a feature of the "din of globalization" is the persistence, despite countless illustrations to the contrary, of the view that globalization is an exclusive or exclusively important feature of the post-cold war, post-1989 world order. For a succinct analysis of the popular phenomenon and its critics, see Geoff Eley, "Historicizing the Global, Politicizing Capital: Giving the Present a Name," *History Workshop Journal*, 2007, no. 63: 154–88, especially 161–63.
10. E. A. Korovin, "Study Aid for International Law (essays)," *The American Journal of International Law* 43, no. 2 (1949), 389n\*; V. Kemenov to A. A. Zhdanov (16 April 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, l. 270. Kemenov was head of VOKS.
11. Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, "New Masses and John Reed Club Artists, 1926–1936: Evolution of Ideology, Subject Matter, and Style," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 12 (Spr 1989): 56–75, here 58, fn. 5; Gloria Garrett Samson, *The American Fund for Public Service: Charles Garland and Radical Philanthropy, 1922–1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 150; Ivan Dmitrievich Papanin, *Life on the Ice Floe: Diary*, tr. Helen Black (New York: Messner, 1939); Margaret Larkin, ed., *Singing Cowboy: A Book of Western Songs* (New York: Knopf, 1931), reviewed by Vance Randolph in *Journal of American Folklore* 45, no. 176 (1932): 274. I could not confirm that the Helen Black who wrote the piano accompaniments to the cowboy songs is the same as the Helen Black of interest here, but the political and artistic proclivities are consistent.
12. *New York Times*, April 12, 1948, 2; Black to Presslit (April 13, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, l. 274; Novoselov (Presslit) to Black (April 14, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, l. 275 (request for clarification).
13. Black to Presslit (15 April 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, l. 276; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, l. 270. Black's suggested wording is very similar to that reported by the *New York Times*, op cit.
14. Black to Presslit (April 19, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, l. 277; and Black to Presslit (April 23, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, l. 272. Kemenov sent the telegram to Zhdanov on April 28; Zhdanov passed it down the chain of command to Shepilov, and Shepilov archived it that day, noting that he had forwarded the issue to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID): Kemenov to Zhdanov (April 28, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 646, l. 271 and marginal notations.

15. Based on his experience working in the Soviet book trade just over a decade after the events recounted here, Richard Hellie argues that this lack of control over Americans representing Soviet cultural institutions was an intentional strategy designed to keep the Soviet Union from becoming entangled in the United States court system, where they could be forced to reveal embarrassing information or "be held liable for all kinds of things." According to his contact, the only requirement was "reliability," by which was meant merely that the representative should not "embarrass" the Soviet Union. See Richard Hellie, "Working for the Soviets: Chicago, 1959–61, Mezhnkiga, and the Soviet Book Industry," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 29, no. 2–4 (2002): 539–52, here 546.
16. Black to Novoselov (April 23, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, ll. 296–99. Novoselov headed Litmuzagenstvo Presslit.
17. Production began on November 28, 1947 and concluded on January 13, 1948: Brand, unpaginated coversheet.
18. For context, compare these sums to the reported payments to the North American principals: \$20,000 to Gouzenko for story rights; \$900 to \$2,000 per week to the screenwriters; \$100,000 to Wellman to direct; and \$25,000 to June Havoc (not a Fox star like Andrews and Tierney) to play a supporting role. In North America, the film grossed just less than \$2 million. Leab, 161–62, 165, 170, 175.
19. This claim is reiterated by Leab, 174, though it is unclear if it is supported by Fox correspondence or the *New York Times* article; both are cited in the same long footnote referring to the claim to have paid \$10,000 and to the contents of other internal discussions at Fox. Leab reports that Fox originally approached Boosey and Hawkes but was rebuffed because of strenuous opposition from the British Embassy. The *New York Times* reported the Soviet objection to the film and Fox's claims to have purchased rights for the music: *New York Times*, April 12, 1948, 2. It ran at least sixteen stories about the film and commotion at the Roy in the next two months.
20. On Fox's apprehension, see Leab, 174.
21. Black to Novoselov (23 April 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, ll. 296–99. The letter probably arrived to VOKS about April 28; it was passed to the Central Committee on May 13 and then to MID. It was archived on May 17. Kemenov to Suslov (May 13, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 636, l. 295 and marginal notations by Suslov and Shepilov.
22. "Historical-Biographical Note," in *Guide to the Charles Recht Papers, 1907–1976*, Tamiment 176; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives (New York: NYU Libraries, 2003), <http://dlib.nyu.edu:8083/tamwagead/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=recht.xml&style=saxon01t2002.xsl>, accessed May 11, 2006.
23. *Dmitry Shostakovich et al. v. Twentieth-Century Fox Film Corporation*, Supreme Court of New York, Special Term, New York County, 196 Misc. 67; 80 N.Y.S. 2d 575; 1948 N.Y. Misc. LEXIS 2618; 77 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 647.
24. *Ibid.*, "Headnotes" and "Opinion," par. 2–3.
25. *Ibid.*, "Opinion," par. 5.
26. *Ibid.*, "Opinion," par. 4.
27. *Ibid.*, "Opinion," par. 5.
28. *Ibid.*, "Opinion," par. 6.
29. *Dmitry Shostakovich et al. v. Twentieth-Century Fox Film Corporation*, Supreme Court of New York, Appellate Division, First Department, 275 A.D. 692; 87 N.Y.S. 2d 430; 1949 N.Y. App. Div. LEXIS 4047.



30. That Black's suggestions included contacting a British publisher and developing mutual copyright obligations in the United States, not France, does not detract from the essential point here: Black indicated that attending to copyright could tip the scales in the Soviets' favor, and Soviet officials did so when the opportunity arose.
31. Kemenov to Vyshinskii (29 April 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 8.
32. Ibid., 8–8ob.
33. On the K-R Affair, see Nikolai Kremmentsov, *The Cure: A Story of Cancer and Politics from the Annals of the Cold War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002). On antic cosmopolitanism in the Soviet domestic music scene, see Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), especially 152–88; and Tomoff, “Uzbek Music’s Separate Path: Interpreting ‘Antic cosmopolitanism’ in Stalinist Central Asia, 1949–52,” *The Russian Review* 63, no. 2 (2004): 212–40.
34. Vyshinskii to Kemenov (May 6, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 9.
35. Kemenov to Vyshinskii (May 13, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, ll. 10–10ob. Kemenov also sent the proposed text for the agreement to the MID official in charge of operations in France, head of MID’s First European Department, S. P. Kozyrev: Kemenov to Kozyrev (May 15, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 11.
36. Kemenov to Vyshinskii (May 13, 1948), l. 10, marginal notation.
37. Kemenov to Vyshinskii (May 25, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 12.
38. Vyshinskii to Kemenov (May 28, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 13.
39. Kemenov to Voroshilov (May 31, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, ll. 14 (copy), 31–31ob.
40. Vyshinskii to Kemenov (June 4, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 15.
41. Kemenov to Vyshinskii (June 9, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, ll. 16–16ob. This agreement retained the provision first introduced in Kemenov’s letter to Voroshilov of 31 May by which Chant du Monde would acquire the rights to Soviet music in France, its colonies, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Italy.
42. Ibid., l. 16.
43. Ibid.
44. Kemenov to Voroshilov (June 5, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, ll. 34–35; Zlobin to Voroshilov (June 9, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 30; Kemenov to Voroshilov (June 11, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, ll. 36–38.
45. Kemenov to Vyshinskii (June 9, 1948), l. 16ob.
46. Kozyrev to Kemenov (June 12, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 18. It apparently took a couple more months for the signed agreement to be ratified by policy organs in the Soviet Union; statements in support of the agreement—now citing the possibility of hard currency earnings and penned by political heavyweights Voroshilov and Zhdanov—dated as late as August 10 appear in the archival file: Kemenov to Voroshilov (6 July 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, ll. 27–28 (includes draft resolution); Voroshilov and Zhdanov to Stalin (undated; archived 8 September 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, ll. 25–26; and Sorin to Kemenov (August 10, 1948), RGASPI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 85, l. 22.
47. Advertisement, *Le Monde*, June 16, 1949, 9.

48. "La projection du film 'le Rideau de fer' provoque des incidents," *Le Monde*, June 17, 1949, 6. A brief account of these events, including the text of the call to "republicans and democrats" to protest, was also published in the Soviet Union a day later: "Protesty protiv demonstratsii antisovetskogo fil'ma v Parizhe," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, June 18, 1949, 4.
49. "De Nouveaux incidents a propos du film 'le Rideau de fer,'" *Le Monde* (19–20 June 1949), 6.
50. "Nouveaux incidents au cinema 'l'Avenue,'" *Le Monde*, June 22, 1949, 9; "Le Rideau de fer," *Le Monde*, 23 June 1949, 5. Soviet press accounts put the arrest total for June 22 at twenty-two, including all sixteen members of Parliament: [Mikhail] Romm, "Gollivud—fabrika lzhi," *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, July 16, 1949, 4.
51. Soviet newspapers reported that the upheaval continued, with forty more protestors arrested on June 23 and a few dozen more in the following days: Romm, 4.
52. Advertisement, *Le Monde*, July 7, 1949, 9.
53. "'Le Rideau de fer' a quitte l'affiche," *Le Monde*, July 9, 1949, 9. In fact, the Soviet press presented the film's closure as a victory of mass workers' politics, explicitly if incorrectly crediting the demonstrations with shutting down the film: Romm, 4. A film director and faculty member at the All-USSR State Institute of Cinematography, M. I. Romm may not have been aware of the accompanying, successful strategy that hinged on copyright. Even if he was, it is not surprising that members of the Soviet elite writing in the press would credit mass political action rather than clever legal ploys for their successes in international cultural competition.
54. Facts of the lower court ruling and results of the appeal are cited in William Strauss, "The Moral Right of the Author," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 4, no. 4 (Aut. 1955): 506–38, here 534–35n56.
55. *Societe Le Chant du Monde v. Societe Fox Europe et Societe Fox Americaine Twentieth Century*, Cour d'appel, Paris, Jan. 13, 1953, D.A. 1954, 16, 80. Strauss provides the dollar equivalencies: 534–35n56.
56. A brief protest in their name was published by *Izvestiia* and picked up by the *New York Times*. See "Moscow Broadcasts Protest," *New York Times*, April 12, 1948, 2.
57. For details, see Kiril Tomoff, "The Illegitimacy of Popularity: Soviet Composers and the Royalties Administration, 1939–1953," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 311–40, especially 322–29.
58. For discussions within the Central Committee apparatus about paying royalties to foreigners, see RGASPI, f. 17, op. 133, d. 346, ad passim (1952–1956), which contains information about both Soviet authors' foreign royalties and foreign authors' royalties in the Soviet Union. Russian privacy laws and archival access rules prohibit discussion or citation of details, but the general approach undertaken by Central Committee bureaucrats was to assert Soviet immunity as a non-Berne Convention state from paying royalties but nevertheless to attempt to oblige individual foreign authors who petitioned on their own behalf.
59. On copyright, the market, and nineteenth-century publishing, see Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Catherine Seville, *Literary Copyright Reform in Early Victorian England: The Framing of the 1842 Copyright Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Brad Sherman and Alain Strowel, eds.,

- Of Authors and Origins: Essays on Copyright Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); and Trevor Ross, "Copyright and the Invention of Tradition," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 26, no. 1 (Autumn 1992): 1–27.
60. A succinct history of the development of international copyright regimes focusing on relations between the United States and Eastern Europe can be found in Janice T. Pilch, "U.S. Copyright Relations with Central, East European, and Eurasian Nations in Historical Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (2006): 325–48.
  61. For the UCC as realization of the "universal republic of letters" ideal, see Paul J. Sherman, "The Universal Copyright Convention: Its Effect on United States Law," *Columbia Law Review* 55, no. 8 (Dec. 1955): 1137–75, here 1137. For an overview of the issues and chronology of accession to the UCC, see Pilch, 332–36.
  62. Chant du Monde still trumpets its rights to music composed by Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Kabalevskii, and Khachaturian: <http://www.chantdumonde.com>, accessed June 8, 2006. Exclusive rights now apply to a smaller area than in 1948: France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Andorra, Monaco, and the countries of francophone Africa.
  63. Pilch, 334–35, including a bibliography of the American response in note 29.
  64. For a judgment that accession to the UCC had not strengthened the Soviet government's ability to suppress dissident publication abroad, see Peter B. Maggs, "New Directions in US-USSR Copyright Relations," *American Journal of International Law* 68, no. 3 (July 1974): 391–409.
  65. For Soviet economists' changing explanations for capitalism's persistence, see Richard B. Day, *Cold War Capitalism: The View from Moscow, 1945–1975* (New York: Sharpe, 1995).
  66. For an encyclopedic overview of cultural competition, including the contemporaneous development of several parallel strategic strains having to do with film that I do not discuss here, between the Soviet Union and United States during the Cold War, see David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), especially the chapters on film: 117–246. Caute also notes that the Soviets enjoyed victories in some fields and times but contends that those victories were always offset by renewed evidence of the suppression of free artistic expression (612). For Caute's treatment of the *Iron Curtain* affair, see 167–69.
  67. It is not just the peculiarities of the French and American legal systems that are responsible here. The Berne Convention established "moral rights" provisions, and one of the main obstacles to the United States joining Berne was that U.S. copyright law did not recognize those rights. See Herman Finkelstein, "The Universal Copyright Convention," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 2, no. 2 (1953): 198–204, here 200.
  68. On the *Iron Curtain* case and regulation of intellectual property on the internet, see Alexander Gigante, "Ice Patch on the Information Superhighway: Foreign Liability for Domestically Created Content," *Cardozo Arts and Entertainment Law Journal*, 1996, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/property00/jurisdiction/Gigante.html>, accessed July 4, 2008. On the role of "moral rights" in legal efforts to stop the use of music to torture inmates at Guantanamo Bay, see David Mery, "Fighting torture with copyright," *The Register*, March 21, 2007, [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/03/21/fighting\\_torture\\_with\\_copyright/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/03/21/fighting_torture_with_copyright/), accessed July 3, 2008. For U.S. copyright law fair use provisions, music, and torture,

see Roger Parloff, "Tormenting Gitmo detainees with copyrighted music: Is torture a 'fair use,'" *Fortune*, March 27, 2007, <http://legalpad.blogs.fortune.cnn.com/2007/03/27/tormenting-gitmo-detainees-with-copyrighted-music-is-torture-a-fair-use/>, accessed July 3, 2008. The practice has been the subject of countless pieces in the American media in the last several years; for a scholarly reaction to this coverage, see Suzanne G. Cusick, "Music as torture / Music as weapon," *Revista Transcultural de Musica / Transcultural Music Review* 10 (2006), [http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/trans10/cusick\\_eng.htm](http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/trans10/cusick_eng.htm), accessed July 3, 2008.

69. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Culture and Politics under Stalin: A Reappraisal," *Slavic Review* 35, no. 2 (June 1976): 211–31. I first encountered the article in its revised form as "Cultural Orthodoxies under Stalin (1975)," in Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 238–56. The chapter ends with an open question: "In cultural terms, then, who was assimilating whom?"
70. Fitzpatrick, "Cultural Orthodoxies," 253–54. For Fitzpatrick's explanation of the rise of the new elite in the years of the Great Terror, see especially "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite," in *Cultural Front*, 149–82.
71. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Politics as Practice: Thoughts on a New Soviet Political History," *Kritika* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 27–54, here 38–39.
72. For expertise and professional organization, see Tomoff, *Creative Union*; for an example and explanation of the "decentralization of decision making," see Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); for the role of science and scientists in ideology formation, see Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
73. Tomoff, *Creative Union*; Pollock.
74. Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
75. Like Julie Hessler (see her "Sheila Fitzpatrick: An Interpretive Essay" in this volume) and undoubtedly many others, I have found it difficult to determine precisely where my own proclivities and ideas start and Fitzpatrick's direct influence ends, though I am certain that indirectly, virtually all of my work is rooted in her influence. I think it is the mark of any outstanding advisor, and more outstanding than Fitzpatrick one could not hope to find, that one's own proclivities are fostered, leads encouraged, and ideas honed in critical conversation.

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## CHAPTER 10

### A TORTURE MEMO: READING VIOLENCE IN THE GULAG<sup>1</sup>

*Golfo Alexopoulos*

In 1952, Alexander V. Ivanov, a 32 year-old prisoner at the Pechorskii corrective labor camp (Pechorlag) in the Far North, wrote two letters addressed to Lavrenty Beria at the Soviet Council of Ministers. The first was intercepted by a camp official who harassed Ivanov for informing Soviet leaders about the torture of prisoners. Seeing that his petition had been seized, Ivanov wrote again. This time he gave his letter of December 3 to another inmate who, upon his release, smuggled the denunciation out of the camp and ensured that the letter journeyed hundreds of miles to the Kremlin in Moscow. “I was so naïve,” he wrote, “to view movies about the development of torture in capitalist countries and to rejoice that we had no such thing. But there is torture (*pytki*) and torment (*istiazaniia*), and they exist in Pechorlag.”<sup>2</sup> Ivanov’s petition captured the attention of its addressee. Beria not only read the letter but, on December 8, he gave it to the head of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), S. N. Kruglov, with the following note: “This isn’t the first sign<sup>3</sup> [of a problem] from the ITL [corrective labor camp]. Carefully verify the stated facts, take measures against those guilty of these outrageous acts (*vinovniki etikh bezobrazii*) and report your results.”<sup>4</sup>

Gulag prisoners wrote many letters of complaint to Soviet authorities about everything from the lack of food, winter clothes, and shoes to the loss of packages from relatives and the abuses of camp staff.<sup>5</sup> This was not the first written complaint to capture Beria’s attention, nor was it the first that Kruglov was charged with investigating. Yet Beria’s insistence on a “thorough verification of the stated facts” of Ivanov’s letter prompted a vast inquiry into the prisoner’s accusations and Pechorlag’s operations. Kruglov immediately called a meeting of the Gulag leadership and established a high-level MVD commission whose stated purpose was “to confirm the contents of the petition sent to the USSR Council of Ministers by prisoner A.V. Ivanov.”<sup>6</sup> Many people at the camp were interrogated. In the end, the inquiry revealed that violations of law pertaining to the detention

of prisoners had indeed occurred in the camp section (*lagernyi punkt*) where prisoner Ivanov had been detained, and a substantial shake-up ensued. On February 13, 1953, the deputy minister of internal affairs, I. Serov, informed Beria that his instructions had been followed: "I am reporting that, per your instructions, the petition of prisoner Ivanov has been verified by a special MVD USSR commission."<sup>7</sup> A number of camp employees received sanctions and the camp director was sacked.

Why would Stalin's chief policeman, a man not known for his aversion to physical abuse, insist on investigating accusations of torture by a Gulag prisoner? According to Oleg Khlevniuk, in 1938–39, as the new head of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), Beria opposed procurators, judges, and local party bosses who attacked chekists and accused them of torture during the Great Terror. He even appealed to Stalin who issued a clear defense of "physical methods" as "completely proper and appropriate."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Beria's decision to investigate reflects not an antipathy to torture or even the recognition of torture, for the existence of torture was ultimately denied in this case. Rather, it appears that Ivanov's letter provided a pretext for an administrative shake-up at Pechorlag that was conceived earlier. Beria acted on this particular letter not because he shared Ivanov's opposition to torture, but because he was disturbed by the disorder or the "outrageous acts" taking place at Pechorlag. It is striking that a prisoner's letter about torture generated a vast investigation that hardly paid attention to the problem of prisoner abuse.

A Gulag prisoner's letter attracted the attention of some of the Soviet Union's most powerful men because it appeared at a time of heightened anxiety over production failures and declining labor productivity in the camps. According to Nicolas Werth, "In 1951 General Kruglov, the minister of internal affairs, was worried about the constant decline in productivity among penal workers" and "began a vast inspection campaign to assess the state of the Gulags." Conclusions of the 1951–1952 inspection reports underscored the fact that "the Gulags had become a much harder mechanism to control."<sup>9</sup> Labor utilization and plan fulfillment were in decline, as large numbers of prisoners did not go to their work sites. Many refused to work, were not given work, or could not go to work because of a shortage of guards; some sat in punishment cells for violating camp rules.<sup>10</sup> In the context of the early 1950s and Kruglov's other exhaustive camp inquiries, the investigation of Pechorlag hardly seems unusual. Yet the problems at this camp appear especially severe. Surely, the letter's vivid account of routine violence against prisoners generated little sympathy from Beria. He was probably moved to action by Ivanov's description of prisoners refusing to work and spending time in punishment cells rather than work sites. Such disorder could not be tolerated.

As this volume celebrates the work of Sheila Fitzpatrick, I have placed identity, a subject she has analyzed meticulously and prolifically in recent years, at the center of my analysis. Ivanov's case reveals the degree to which readings of camp violence depended on the "ascribed identity" of

prisoners.<sup>11</sup> For Ivanov, a man who fashioned himself as a patriotic citizen and war veteran, sadistic camp guards arbitrarily ascribed the label “thief” to ordinary prisoners in order to justify their abuse. For an official at Pechorlag, the savage gangs of “criminal-bandit” inmates, and not the guards, were responsible for torture. For the Gulag leadership, Pechorlag’s director and his deputies were “unable to create conditions in the camp that would have precluded” the violence, that is, they failed to identify and isolate “the most dangerous criminal” elements.<sup>12</sup> Ivanov’s rich case tells many stories, but the one chosen here concerns the divergent readings of camp violence or the ways in which party leaders, prisoners, and camp officials understood and justified acts of cruelty at Pechorlag. The case includes Ivanov’s vivid account of torture, the investigating committee’s catalog (in the hundreds of pages) of problems at the camp especially in the detention and control of prisoners, and horrific accounts of murder among prisoners. I look at those who committed, described, and responded to acts of torture in the camp at Pechorlag in order to locate the boundary between legitimate violence and violent misconduct in the Stalinist camp system.

### THE VIOLENCE OF EVERYDAY LIFE AT PECHORLAG

Ivanov’s petition triggered a detailed examination of nearly every aspect of Pechorlag’s vast operations. The camp was subordinate to the Chief Administration of Camps for Railroad Construction (GULZhDS), one of the largest branch administrations of the Gulag.<sup>13</sup> The associate chief of camp operations at GULZhDS sat on the MVD investigating commission together with five representatives from the Chief Administration of Camps (GULAG). Beyond their inquiry into Ivanov’s specific charges of torture, the MVD commission offered a thorough assessment of Pechorlag as a whole. Among other things, it issued a lengthy report of January 16, 1953 that examined nearly every detail of camp life, from economic operations to food supply and personnel.<sup>14</sup> It questioned sixteen people including prisoners and guards, and inspected 57 camp sections, nearly half of Pechorlag, including the sixteen sections of Ivanov’s fourth camp division (*lagernoe otdelenie*). Its criticism of the labor camp focused on the control of prisoners and the exploitation of their labor: “With respect to the detention, isolation, and maintenance of prisoners as well as the use of their labor, the work of the Pechorskii corrective-labor camp is completely unsatisfactory, and orders and instructions from the MVD USSR on these issues are being grossly violated.”<sup>15</sup>

The Pechorskii corrective labor camp was located in the Komi autonomous republic in northern Russia, a sub-Arctic region of taiga and tundra populated by a vast network of camps whose prisoners worked in everything from timber cutting, oil extraction, and coal mining, to building, road, and railway construction.<sup>16</sup> Anne Applebaum describes Komi as a “vast republic of prisons” because “prisoners planned and built all of the republic’s major cities” plus its railways, road, and industrial infrastructure: “To the inmates



who were sent there in the 1940s and 1950s, Komi seemed to be nothing but one vast camp—which it was.<sup>17</sup> Three of Komi's many camps—Sevdivinlag, Sevdzheldorlag, and Sevpechlag—all railroad-building camps, merged to create the sprawling complex that became Pechorlag in 1950.<sup>18</sup> The largest of these, Northern Pechora Camp (Sevpechlag) was established a decade earlier for the high-priority construction of the 1560-kilometer Northern Pechora railroad.<sup>19</sup> At the time Sevpechlag was formed in May 1940, the Politburo sought to enhance coal production by accelerating construction of the railroad that would connect Kotlas and Vorkuta in the coal-mining regions of Komi.<sup>20</sup> The camp had problems for years. A report to Beria from the Gulag chief, V. G. Nasedkin, in May 1941, described the horrible conditions there just before the outbreak of World War II: 70 percent of prisoners lice-infested, exceptionally high incidents of illness such as scurvy, shortages of basic food and other supplies.<sup>21</sup> Even Solzhenitsyn noted the harsh conditions at these northern camps and the cruelty of their chekist directors.<sup>22</sup>

This was an enormous camp compound. At Pechorlag, camp divisions were spread out along the Pechorskii railroad vast distances from the central camp administration. The first camp division in the city of Vel'sk was located 995 kilometers from Pechora.<sup>23</sup> Many of the camp divisions stood more than 800 kilometers from the central camp administration, and camp sections were often situated 100–150 kilometers from the administrative center of their respective camp division.<sup>24</sup> In 1952, Pechorlag's 47,000 plus prisoners resided in 11 camp divisions and as many as 120 smaller camp sections.<sup>25</sup> Although MVD investigators sharply criticized camp operations at Pechorlag, they also acknowledged the difficulty in managing the economic and security functions of such a vast complex of camps.<sup>26</sup> Lynne Viola's account of the special settlements also provides vivid detail of how space and distance produced situations of decentralized authority and extreme violence.<sup>27</sup>

The commission catalogued various problems at the camp, which were surely not unique to Pechorlag: acts of extortion, theft, and murder; heterosexual and homosexual relationships; contact between prisoners and the local civilian population; work strikes; escape and attempted escape. Men were placed in camp divisions that were supposed to be reserved for only women.<sup>28</sup> Convicted criminals performed many administrative and staff functions.<sup>29</sup> In their report, MVD investigators complained that a dramatic breakdown of order had occurred in the past year. Violations of camp rules nearly doubled at Pechorlag from 1951 to 1952. Incidents involving ties with the local population and the cohabitation of prisoners increased twofold. The allocation of living space had fallen below the established norm to 0.9–1.5 square meters per person in some camp divisions.<sup>30</sup> Half the camp divisions failed to maintain an adequate supply of firewood in the winter. Sanitation was close to nonexistent: there were hardly any trash bins, barracks were dirty, prisoners' linens were poorly washed, if at all. Often there was no water or hot water and inmates used snow to bathe themselves. Prisoners took a bath and washed their clothes on average about every 15–20 days. Lice infestations were common.<sup>31</sup>

Problems of daily life at the camp affected both prisoners and guards. Even in the prewar period, one Pechorlag boss described how the security guards suffered “like the prisoners, with no housing and little food.”<sup>32</sup> In 1952, serious interruptions in the camp’s food supply occurred: for one month, there was no flour, meat and butter; another month no meat, butter and sugar.<sup>33</sup> The hardships of daily life appear to have leveled the guards and their prisoners, and both groups exhibited problems with work and discipline. Nearly a quarter of the guards were reprimanded for infractions such as sleeping or getting drunk on the job; four committed suicide and dozens were sentenced for criminal misconduct.<sup>34</sup> The problems at Pechorlag were not unique for sure. Dreadful living conditions for prisoners and severe shortages of basic food and supplies were common in many camps at this time.<sup>35</sup> While a number of scholars have described a profound crisis in Stalin’s penal camp system in the early 1950s, as Steven Barnes argues, “many of the signs of crisis . . . were in fact endemic to the Gulag and had been for years.”<sup>36</sup>

Yet of all the problems catalogued in the reports of the MVD commission, none worried officials as much as declines in labor productivity. According to Galina Ivanova, “In 1951–52, not a single major camp production administration completed its plan.”<sup>37</sup> The economic performance of Pechorlag and the productivity of its prisoners appear to have been especially poor. In the course of 1952, the degree to which the camp fell short of its production targets increased sharply with some camp divisions failing to meet their output norms by as much as 45%.<sup>38</sup> MVD investigators criticized what they described as Pechorlag’s underutilization of prisoner labor, one of the major problems confronting Stalin’s penal camp system in the early 1950s.<sup>39</sup> Pechorlag’s plan called for the exploitation of prisoner labor at a rate of 65.5%, but it reported only 57.4% of prisoners working in production. The camp registered more than twice the plan’s target figure (8% instead of 3.3%) for prisoners in group IV, that is, prisoners “not working for various reasons.”<sup>40</sup> A dramatic spike in the number of prisoners refusing to work occurred in a relatively short period, from 14,154 incidents in 1951 to 39,745 in 1952.<sup>41</sup> According to MVD investigators, labor utilization was especially poor in Pechorlag’s six special regime camp divisions that were designated for the most serious offenders (*spetslagpodrazdeleniia strogogo rezhima*).<sup>42</sup>

MVD investigators attacked Kliuchkin, the director of Pechorlag, and attributed these problems to a failure of leadership. However, any camp director would have found it exceedingly difficult to supervise the operations of each camp section. Disorder at Pechorlag was more likely related to the problem of overcrowding as the camp took in prisoners it could hardly accommodate. MVD investigators charged that when Pechorlag’s administrators received a new influx of prisoners in the second half of 1952, “they were unable to create conditions at the camp that would have precluded the rise of disorder among inmates.”<sup>43</sup> New prisoners came constantly to Pechorlag, and in 1952 a torrent of 15,998 inmates entered the camp.<sup>44</sup> Just in the months between April 1952 and January 1953, the camp’s inmate population increased by 10,000 or roughly 25%.<sup>45</sup> To deal with the massive

influx of additional prisoners, camp authorities established thirty-three new camp sections and divisions, including fifteen temporary camp units (the so-called *stroitel'nye poezdy*) in which living conditions for prisoners were particularly inadequate, especially in the winter.<sup>46</sup> Ivanov resided in one of these *stroipoezdy*, the seventh section of the camp's fourth division, which was dissolved in December 1952, probably in response to the impending investigation. This particular camp section was designated as a temporary "prophylactic quarantine" (*profilakticheskii karantin*) for prisoners who were coming into Pechorlag from prisons and other places of detention.<sup>47</sup>

Most of all, MVD investigators criticized camp officials for failing to isolate the worst criminal element.<sup>48</sup> Their reading of the violence at Pechorlag depended on the identity of the victims. To them, violence could be justified and contained if camp officials would only identify and isolate the "most dangerous elements." They complained that camp authorities had been frequently warned to study the composition of the new arrivals and to isolate those who belonged to "criminal-bandit" or "enemy" groups. The MVD Commission argued that prisoners at Pechorlag were not managed according to the degree of "social danger" they posed. Less dangerous offenders, such as former judicial, procuracy and MVD-MGB workers or those serving time for military offenses, lived and worked alongside the "criminal-bandit element" that often "persecuted" them.<sup>49</sup> MVD investigators, to use James Scott's formulation, simplified and made legible a very diverse camp population.<sup>50</sup> In their minds, there existed two categories of camp inmates—prisoners sentenced for military, property, and other common offenses and those who committed counterrevolutionary or especially dangerous crimes.<sup>51</sup> Counterrevolutionaries (those sentenced as traitors to the motherland or persons convicted of murder, escape, robbery, or banditry) constituted the most hostile inmates, and apparently Ivanov's camp section had a fair number of them. In order for MVD investigators to justify the violence against Ivanov, they would have to classify this victim of torture as an "especially dangerous criminal bandit element." Yet Ivanov hardly fit the description.

## LETTER FROM THE GULAG TO THE KREMLIN

Born in the Black Sea town of Anapa in 1920, Alexander Vladimirovich Ivanov was sentenced three times between 1947 and 1951, twice for theft and once for hooliganism. Since 1947 he largely lived in Gulag detention, as he completed one term in a labor camp only to be quickly rearrested on another charge.<sup>52</sup> In his petition, Ivanov presents the identity of a useful citizen who worked in the mines and at sea during the war. "After the war," the prisoner wrote, "I didn't experience even a minor blow but here [in Pechorlag] in the course of ten minutes they've made me and other prisoners lying beside me disabled for life." He minces no words when describing the torture he endured at Pechorlag. He began his letter by describing his disillusionment with how Pechorlag had betrayed the promise of Soviet justice: "For people who have committed some sort of crime, there exist certain

humane laws of the Soviet Union, and these laws cannot be distorted or misinterpreted in any corner of the USSR. In fact, this is hardly the case.”<sup>53</sup> A reader in the Kremlin would have taken note of the prisoner’s comparison between Gulag officials, Nazis, and capitalists. “Here [in Pechorlag] there is no Soviet power,” Ivanov wrote, “Here arbitrariness rules, akin to fascism. There are torture chambers (*zastenki*), cells for torture (*kamery pytok*), and all the instruments [of torture].”<sup>54</sup>

Ivanov characterized all of the prisoners who had been subjected to torture, including himself, as innocent victims.<sup>55</sup> In particular, he highlighted the case of more than thirty sick inmates who defied orders to work in the seventh section of the camp’s fourth division. According to Ivanov, officials forced the men to work although the prisoners claimed to be ill. When the prisoners responded with a work strike, they got a penalty ration (*shtrafnoi paick*). Ivanov claimed that the defiant prisoners refused to accept the penalty of a reduced food ration and continued to defy their work order. Officials responded to the prisoners’ protest with further sanction, and sentenced them to time in the penalty isolator (*shtrafnoi izoliator*) or punishment cell.<sup>56</sup> In a poem about her Gulag detention, one former prisoner wrote: “And here’s some advice for you all . . . From punishment cells, stay far away . . .”<sup>57</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s character, Ivan Denisovich, described the horrors of the punishment cells in more detail: “. . . stone walls, a concrete floor, and no window . . . If you had ten days in the cells here and sat them out to the end, it meant you’d be a wreck for the rest of your life. You got TB and you’d never be out of hospitals as long as you lived. And the fellows who did fifteen days were dead and buried.”<sup>58</sup> Ivanov’s description was equally vivid, and included discussion of the straight jacket which Solzhenitsyn also identified as an instrument of torture used by state security officials.<sup>59</sup>

This punishment cell is basically a torture chamber. The system is this: the guards “work on” the prisoner who is sent there. That is, if he keeps quiet, then he is simply beaten. If he says a word, then they put him in a strait jacket (*smiritel’naia rubashka*), twist his arms and legs, and break his spine. The guards (*predstaviteli nadzora*) employ these instruments of torture systematically, as “prophylactic measures.” Handcuffs are regularly used. Once they secure the handcuffs, the guards pull on them so that the person becomes incapacitated (*nerabotosposobnym*). And this occurs every day, from one day to the next. People emerge from the torture chamber and are either disabled or hopelessly ill. Not a single individual has completely recovered from this torture. Can it really be that simply because I refused to accept an illegal punishment ration, I have to be maimed? Where are we, in what country? It can’t be that this is going on in all camps.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to the case of the thirty inmates, Ivanov identified several other prisoners who were wrongly committed to the punishment cell, confined in a strait jacket, and mercilessly beaten. The investigators of Ivanov’s petition focused on the cases that involved individual prisoners. Listing each prisoner’s name and the date of punishment, Ivanov presented a catalogue of

abuse. For example, he mentioned the case of an eighteen-year-old girl who was punished for calling out, "Good night, boys!"<sup>61</sup> Investigators confirmed that the young woman had been placed in a strait jacket without grounds, but noted that she had been sanctioned for refusing to work and for talking too much to prisoners in the next cell.<sup>62</sup>

Occasionally, the guards would stuff a dirty floor rag into a prisoner's mouth to keep him or her from crying out in pain. For their own amusement, according to Ivanov, guards would sometimes keep prisoners in the punishment cell for days and continue to torture them well beyond the formal term of their sanction. Moreover, they deliberately manufactured the existence of criminal gangs in an attempt to turn prisoners against each other (and perhaps to redirect antagonism away from themselves). The prisoner wrote, "...here they specifically create prisoner gangs that exterminate each other. On a prisoner's record, they attach a specific label, for example 'thief' although the person has never stolen anything in his life."<sup>63</sup> According to Jacques Rossi, the term thief (*vor*) described "an individual belonging to the criminal world (independent of specialty) observing the thieves' law."<sup>64</sup> Ivanov asserted that the criminal identity was an ascribed one, as guards artificially constructed criminal recidivists out of ordinary inmates. The practice of classifying prisoners according to the "degree of social danger" they posed was apparently improvised, but these ascribed identities mattered, for they determined a person's rank and treatment within the camp system.

It should be stressed that Ivanov's letter did not represent an indictment of Soviet power, and the petitioner did not even contest his arrest and detention. Rather, the prisoner inserted positive references to the labor camps and Soviet justice in general, and offered only specific charges of abuse supported by names and dates. He directed his attacks at Pechorlag officials only, and stressed that the actions of the guards represented formal legal violations:

According to the law, prisoners coming to a camp are supposed to be held in quarantine for a certain period of time. But this isn't happening here. From day one people are put to work without being seen by a medical commission... By law, the strait jacket can only be used on mentally disturbed prisoners, only for a discrete period of time and only in the presence of a doctor. There is never a doctor in the punishment cell! They apply the strait jacket when they want, on whomever they want, and for an indefinite time!<sup>65</sup>

In a vivid description of torture, Ivanov writes: "[The guards] dampen the strait jacket in water and they put it on a person. First they insult [the prisoner], and then they twist [the strait jacket]. Everyone who has been in that torture chamber has gone directly to the infirmary afterwards."<sup>66</sup> What would have been the point of putting prisoners into a wet strait jacket? In his description of the *smiritel'naia rubashka* and its uses, Rossi explains: "Strait jacket made of coarse linen. The long ends of the sleeves are stretched around the body and firmly tied in back... Guards sometimes wet the strait

jacket before putting it on the prisoner. When the jacket dries out, it shrinks, causing unbearable pain.”<sup>67</sup> Ivanov claimed that he experienced firsthand the torture which he described in his letter: “On 16 August 1952, I was subjected to this kind of torture and taken unconscious to the hospital where I remain to this day.”<sup>68</sup>

The prisoner denounced various individuals as perpetrators or collaborators, persons he said “organized and executed” the wrongdoing. He identified “a group of MVD workers” by name and title, including the current and former heads of the fourth camp division, the head of the sixth camp section and his deputy, and the official who intercepted his first petition. Ivanov also charged that the apparently Jewish doctor of his camp division, M.N. Lipshits, was an enemy who had served a sentence for poisoning Gorky. Writing in the period of the Doctor’s Plot, the Gulag inmate again demonstrated his knowledge of party jargon. Fitzpatrick noted that “Letter-writers of the Stalin era did their best to master the language of *Pravda*,” and Ivanov was no exception.<sup>69</sup> He wrote: “Lipshits devotes all his energy to turning prisoners against Soviet power. His work is not controlled by anyone.”<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Ivanov stated that the worst acts of brutality were committed by “an experienced hangman” named Stepanov, a man who used to be head of the punishment cell until he was arrested after suffocating an inmate in a strait jacket. Ivanov denounced Stepanov by invoking the great Soviet Army: “Surely someone must be able to call a hangman to task, a man who distorts Soviet laws [and] mutilates [our] youth. They will go to serve in the Soviet Army after their sentence, but they will be disabled.”<sup>71</sup> The petitioner claimed that “a minor rearrangement” allowed the brutal Stepanov to remain as master of the punishment cell although, like many prisoners, he was formally employed as an orderly. Stepanov’s shifting role was not unusual for camp employees. Gulag officials often found themselves among the ranks of their prisoners. Many were sentenced not only for murder but for embezzlement and theft, and prisoners too often performed administrative tasks in the Soviet Union’s remote and understaffed labor camps.

The fact that Ivanov wrote such a letter demonstrates his faith in the Soviet system of petitioning and redress. It is striking that this prisoner openly charged camp guards with abusing inmates and that he expected remedy from the Kremlin. Apparently he was not so naïve, for the Pechorlag official who intercepted the prisoner’s original letter was among those sanctioned. Both petitioners and Kremlin leaders took seriously this informal practice of letter-writing and whistle-blowing. At the same time, the letter may have been largely an act of desperation. Ivanov closed his letter with an appeal to Beria for protection: “Naturally, since they are trying to eliminate me as quickly as possible, I ask you [this]: if you do send your representatives to investigate, then they should find me immediately, [assuming the perpetrators] haven’t wiped me off the face of the earth before then.”<sup>72</sup> There is no indication that the messenger became the victim of a revenge killing, for the archives do not tell us what became of Ivanov.

## PRISONER ABUSE OR ABUSIVE PRISONERS?

The archival record on Ivanov's case is largely comprised of documents drafted by the MVD commission, yet the voice of Pechorlag's camp administrators is not entirely absent. A lengthy report of January 5, 1953 written by a certain Rumiantsev, the head of Pechorlag's department for operational work (*nachal'nik otdela rezhima i operraboty Pechorskogo ITL MVD*), catalogued various violations of camp rules by prisoners in 1952. It appears that Rumiantsev was not among the camp officials sacked or sanctioned, yet his voice is striking. In content, tone, and emphasis, this report by a Pechorlag official stands in sharp contrast to the documents produced by the MVD commission. Most of the document consists of gruesome descriptions of premeditated killing that occurred in the camp. In 1952, many violations of camp discipline were recorded, including 42 people murdered and 37 injured, and 143 prisoners who attempted or successfully escaped.<sup>73</sup> Prisoners transformed ordinary items—shirts, shovels, floor rags, firewood—into implements for murder. A prisoner took a log and beat another inmate to death; one man killed another with a brick; two prisoners axed another prisoner to death; one killed another with a crow-bar; one inmate stabbed another with a shovel; two prisoners killed another for failing to pay them the money he lost in a card game; a female inmate used a knife and hammer to kill a nineteen-year-old woman who was serving a twenty-year sentence for theft. The writer strongly suggests that the dangerous prisoner population made Pechorlag an exceedingly difficult camp to control. In Rumiantsev's report, it appears as if the balance of power at the camp had shifted in favor of the most violent prisoners.<sup>74</sup>

Rumiantsev stressed that cruel inmates, rather than camp administrators, were the ones violating the rules at Pechorlag. For this reason, his report reads as a defense against the MVD commission's scathing criticism of the camp staff. The Pechorlag official attributed much of the violence to gang activity, which often meant little more than two or more inmates acting together. For Rumiantsev, the perpetrators constituted gangs of inveterate criminals who followed the "thieves' law" (*vory v zakone*). A group of nine prisoners suffocated a prisoner using a bed sheet; two prisoners suffocated another with a towel; a group of five prisoners killed another prisoner with a pick; a group of ten prisoners suffocated another prisoner using a shirt; five prisoners strangled another inmate to death; nine prisoners suffocated another inmate; a group of nine prisoners took part in the murder of a prisoner whom they suspected of informing camp authorities about their planned escape. A group of Russian and Ukrainian prisoners used knives, weights, and sticks to attack a brigade of Dagestani prisoners, and the fight resulted in the deaths of two of the Dagestani prisoners; thirteen others were seriously injured. Nineteen prisoners got drunk on vodka brought into the camp by a camp employee, and during the drunken frenzy, one prisoner was killed. In 1952, a special camp court (*spetslagsud*) convicted 370 prisoners on everything from theft of socialist property to sabotage, but the vast majority received sentences for

banditry and escape.<sup>75</sup> A reader of this vivid catalogue of brutality would not be inclined to blame the camp functionaries who managed the mayhem, and it seems this was precisely the reaction Rumiantsev hoped to elicit.

Rumiantsev offered a defense of Pechorlag by demonstrating the camp administration's ability to police its own staff. He reproduced a tired MVD formulation concerning how camp officials at various levels had been sanctioned for "allowing" certain acts of banditry to occur. In a number of cases, he wrote, camp functionaries were fired, reprimanded, or arrested. He also vindicated security guards at the camp when he stressed the routine and savage violence of prisoners. Rumiantsev ended his report by noting that camp guards were not up to rank, an implicit indictment of central MVD operations. Persons in charge of the camp's supervisory staff were supposed to be at the officer rank yet were not: "Of course," he concludes in the last line of his long report, "this [lack of rank] is reflected in the work and education of the supervisory staff."<sup>76</sup> In defense of the camp leadership, he noted that Pechorlag authorities had organized additional instruction and training for guards and not a few guards had been reprimanded for violations. The prisoners represented habitual murderers who formed dangerous gangs, and poorly trained MVD guards were no match for them. The balance of power in the camp seemed unstable. For Rumiantsev, the problems at Pechorlag were caused by prisoners and not staff.

MVD investigators saw things differently. For them, acts of banditry occurred because of administrative failures, that is, weak surveillance and the absence of instruction and supervision.<sup>77</sup> They attributed the camp violence to poor supervision and weak political-education work.<sup>78</sup> The same explanation was offered for the problem of violent prisoners. Insufficient attention was being paid to political education; the truly irredeemable "bandit" elements were not being separated from less dangerous prisoners; top camp leaders supervised their staff poorly; and midlevel officials were not gathering intelligence among prisoners that would prevent acts of violence before they could occur. The camp director and his deputies failed to take necessary prophylactic measures to remove the perpetrators of banditry and murder in a timely manner or take measures to prevent criminal activity.<sup>79</sup> MVD bosses wrote: "All incidents of banditry in the camp occurred largely as a result of the failure to take appropriate measures to isolate the active criminal-bandit element, carelessness on the part of camp administrators and inadequate work by the camp's supervisors and guards."<sup>80</sup> In particular, they attributed prisoner insubordination and the resulting loss of labor days to weak "cultural-educational work among prisoners" and suggested that more instruction was needed. "Conversations with prisoners occur rarely," the MVD investigators scolded.<sup>81</sup> One hardly gets the impression from Rumiantsev's report that conversations would have done the trick.

Reading the admonitions of MVD bosses in the context of Rumiantsev's gruesome report on prisoner violence, one is struck by the vast cognitive distance that separated the men of Komi and the Kremlin. For the former, violence at the camp was perpetrated by gangs of inveterate criminals; for the



latter, camp violence was the result of administrative failures. In the years before Stalin's death in 1953, the labor camps were plagued by systemic violence, with perpetrators and victims often switching roles. Yet MVD investigators spoke as if routine acts of violence could be prevented by improving political education and isolating certain categories of prisoners. MVD bosses seem unable to imagine that the penal camp system had generated a culture of violence beyond the reach of socialist education or Soviet control. It appears that they were either exceedingly confident in administrative solutions to the problem of camp violence or stubbornly committed to pinning blame on Pechorlag's administration.

### CAMP VIOLENCE AND PRISONER IDENTITIES

Regarding Ivanov's charges of torture, the commission's findings were decidedly mixed. On the one hand, the MVD investigators confirmed Ivanov's claim that in the period June–August 1952, many prisoners had been detained in the punishment cell without warrant. They established that the guards at the punishment cell had mistreated prisoners: “illegally” confining them to a strait jacket, twisting their limbs, and stuffing dirty rags in the mouth of inmates who shrieked in protest.<sup>82</sup> The commission blamed a number of supervisors in the fourth camp division and the sixth and seventh camp sections for not adequately monitoring their staff or ensuring that guards followed legal procedures when detaining prisoners in the punishment cell. Yet Ivanov was in no way vindicated.

Torture's witness and victim did not see justice. The MVD commission refashioned Ivanov's identity in order to discredit him and dispute his essential charges. It denounced the petitioner as a member of a criminal gang, and described him as “exercising authority among the criminal-bandit element” in the camp.<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, this was not its initial finding. On January 30, 1953, the MVD investigators issued a seventeen-page report to MVD chief Kruglov in which they described Ivanov as an ordinary inmate who, according to his prisoner file, did not belong to a gang of criminal recidivists. At the same time, the commission noted that many of the prisoners in Ivanov's camp section who had come to Pechorlag from other camps did, in fact, belong to one or another gang of criminal recidivists.<sup>84</sup> A few days later, the findings of the commission were issued in a document approved by Kruglov, his deputy Serov, and the Gulag chief, I.I. Dolgikh. Here, Ivanov was transformed into a bandit and malingerer.<sup>85</sup> It appears that when Kruglov, Serov, and Dolgikh prepared the commission's findings for Beria, they decided to turn the petitioner from an ordinary prisoner into a recidivist bandit. One reads for the first time about suspicious fluctuations in Ivanov's record of work ability. In August 1952, the prisoner was capable of performing heavy labor, less than a month later he was classified as severely ill with tuberculosis, and in January 1953, Ivanov appeared healthy and capable of work with no signs of tuberculosis.<sup>86</sup> This, asserted the MVD bosses, demonstrated that the petitioner had threatened people to get out of work. They called

Ivanov a faker and a gang member, and their remaking of the prisoner's identity made it possible for them to dispute most of Ivanov's charges.

Why ascribe this identity to Ivanov? It allowed the Gulag bosses to discredit the prisoner and his accusations, and to improve their image with Beria. They were able to deny the central claim of torture at Pechorlag and to legitimize the violence against Ivanov and others. Had Ivanov maintained the identity of an ordinary prisoner, his accusations could be damaging. By turning Ivanov into a member of a dangerous gang of criminal recidivists, the Gulag leadership diminished the power of the letter. Ivanov had characterized a group of thirty fellow inmates as sick prisoners who were being forced to work, yet the commission vilified them as a gang of criminal-recidivists who used scare tactics and death threats to coerce camp doctors into excusing them from work.<sup>87</sup> The MVD commission did not condemn the "experienced hangman" to which Ivanov referred in his petition and instead denied that Stepanov had assaulted prisoners being held in the punishment cell. It rejected Ivanov's charge that camp guards deliberately created prisoner gangs and provoked one gang against another. It refuted the prisoner's claim that guards in the punishment cell had placed him in a strait jacket too. It rejected Ivanov's assertion that the doctor in the infirmary had been sentenced for poisoning Gorky and devoted his energies to turning prisoners against Soviet power. Rather, Lipshits had been personally threatened by the "criminal-bandit element" and thus feared entering the camp zone.<sup>88</sup> In addition, the people Ivanov named in his petition as the perpetrators or enablers of torture were not the people sanctioned by the MVD commission. The commission fired the camp director and his deputy, and recommended that three camp guards be arrested on criminal charges, yet none of these individuals belonged to the "group of MVD workers" that Ivanov denounced in his petition. To be sure, the commission criticized the MVD workers that Ivanov named in his petition for their misconduct, yet these individuals did not receive the most severe sanctions.<sup>89</sup> Criminal sanctions went to those individuals who, according to investigators, were directly responsible for abuses in just a few cases that Ivanov noted in his petition. Supervisors in the camp's fourth division, including the chief of security, N.N. Nikitin, faced criminal prosecution for illegally forcing certain prisoners into strait jackets.<sup>90</sup>

Finally, MVD investigators remained wholly unmoved by Ivanov's vivid description of torture, and disputed the prisoner's assertions regarding the abuse of prisoners at Pechorlag. Although they confirmed the fact that a few prisoners had been placed in the punishment cell for petty infractions and for months on end, they refused to acknowledge physical abuse: "The inquiry did not confirm that prisoners held in the punishment cell had been subjected to bodily injury and crippling as Ivanov indicated in his petition."<sup>91</sup> In fact, the commission took little interest in the question of torture. Its stated task was to "verify the contents of prisoner Ivanov's petition to the USSR Council of Ministers," yet its investigation of the camp constituted much more than an inquiry into Ivanov's specific charges. The commission

attacked camp authorities but not for sanctioning the use of torture. Torture did not occur. There was no abuse of prisoners. The MVD commission only acknowledged that a few chekists acted “illegally” or violated camp regulations when they placed certain prisoners into a strait jacket. Abuse of prisoners was entirely excused in the case of inmates who acted collectively and thereby acquired the identity of so-called bandit elements. No one was criticized for mistreating Ivanov or the group of thirty prisoners that he described in his petition, for these men were considered thieves and bandits who deserved harsh treatment. Physical attacks on perceived criminal gangs were condoned. When guards mistreated individual prisoners who seemed to pose little danger, these actions appeared to MVD investigators as unwarranted. The commission only uncovered wrongdoing in the case of individual prisoners (including the eighteen-year-old woman) who were placed in a strait jacket “illegally.” This seems to be where the MVD drew the line between legitimate violence and violent misconduct. In the minds of MVD investigators, when prisoners acted collectively, they became identified as gang members and the use of violence against them appeared justified.

In the end, the MVD merely used Ivanov’s letter to confirm its persistent complaint about Pechorlag: prisoners were not adequately controlled, managed, and utilized at the camp. MVD investigators did not condemn acts of cruelty against prisoners but, rather, concluded that Pechorlag had failed to control its inmates or exploit prison labor effectively. They charged the camp director and his deputies with failing to provide leadership at the camp, for allowing violations of Soviet law to occur, for failing to take necessary measures to ensure the proper detention and isolation of prisoners, and failing to execute central MVD instructions on improving operations at the camp “despite repeated warnings” from the MVD leadership in Moscow.<sup>92</sup> These findings prompted (or provided a pretext for) a major shake-up at the camp. At a time when many other camp administrators were being fired as well, Serov reported that “the MVD USSR has removed the head of the Pechorskii ITL MVD, comrade Kliuchkin, from his post for failing to exercise appropriate leadership in camp operations.”<sup>93</sup> In addition, two directors of camp divisions, nineteen directors of camp sections, and nine other employees were removed from their posts for either failing to do their job or for insufficient political dependability.<sup>94</sup> The camp official who intercepted Ivanov’s first petition addressed to Beria and subsequently harassed the petitioner was removed from his post and fired from the MVD. Many other officials, especially from Ivanov’s fourth camp division, received demotions or sanctions.<sup>95</sup> In the eyes of the MVD leaders, the offense committed at Pechorlag was not torture but administrative failure.

## CONCLUSION

Prisoner Ivanov’s letter to Beria and the resulting MVD investigation demonstrate that the leaders of the Soviet Union’s state security apparatus viewed violence in the Gulag through the lens of what Sheila Fitzpatrick

called ascribed identities. They narrowly condemned the use of force against those prisoners who acted alone when they violated camp rules, but did not object to violence against inmates who engaged in collective action such as work strikes. Prisoners involved in any form of collective action were ascribed the identity of “bandit elements” who, in the eyes of chekists, represented the very worst of Gulag prisoners. Ivanov accused camp guards of ascribing the thief-bandit identity without justification, and in the end, the MVD commission ascribed this damaging identity to Ivanov too. It appears doubtful that the prisoner was the malicious gang member they made him out to be. The Gulag’s recidivist criminals had a reputation for refusing to perform any work for Soviet power, and not for writing letters to Beria professing their patriotism. One Pechorlag boss from the prewar period described how a hardened criminal once said to him, “I have been sitting for 25 years in the GULAG and I have never worked for anyone.”<sup>96</sup> Yet the group of thirty prisoners, about whom Ivanov wrote sympathetically, had refused work because of illness or reduced rations and not due to any general anti-Soviet sentiment. It was easy enough for Kruglov, Serov, and Dolgikh to depict Ivanov and other prisoners as bandit elements, dismiss their legitimate charges of prisoner abuse, and avoid any responsibility (before their boss, Beria) for the Gulag’s systemic problems.

Nonetheless, the three men were not completely off the hook. Given the horrendous living conditions experienced by Pechorlag prisoners at this time, one did not have to be a defiant recidivist in order to refuse work. The Gulag chief, Dolgikh, knew that many camps were experiencing severe problems with the supply of food and clothing, and that problems were especially acute at Pechorlag. There, in the first seven months of 1952, “as a rule, some kind of food was lacking or had been shipped in very limited amounts” and many prisoners could not go to their worksite because they lacked footwear.<sup>97</sup> As the investigation of Ivanov’s petition concluded, in February–March 1953, Dolgikh reported to Kruglov on the dreadful living conditions of prisoners and “serious lapses in the provision of food and supplies for prisoners in MVD labor camps and colonies” including Pechorlag, and asked for the MVD chief’s intervention.<sup>98</sup> Dolgikh was willing to let his people take the hit and to condemn camp administrators for their lapses, but his reports to Kruglov also acknowledged the Gulag’s limitations in the context of chronic shortages. Dolgikh seemed to be telling his boss that the MVD leadership had to do its share to ensure the basic provision of food and supplies for labor camp prisoners. It is unlikely that Kruglov responded positively, for his own deputy, Serov, had just a few years earlier irately rejected claims that food shortages affected the labor productivity of German workers in the Soviet zone.<sup>99</sup> These were not men who were moved by hungry workers.

Poor camp conditions and prisoner violence continued. The MVD commission investigating Ivanov’s petition instructed Pechorlag to make improvements in inmates’ living conditions, the use of prisoner labor, and the isolation and detention regime, and it noted that representatives from the Gulag and the Chief Administration of Camps for Railroad Construction

would follow-up in May 1953.<sup>100</sup> Stalin's death would temporarily disrupt that plan and prompt a massive transformation of the Gulag system as a whole and Pechorlag in particular.<sup>101</sup> Now under the Ministry of Justice (MIu), the camp continued to be closely monitored. In November 1953, long after Beria's arrest, Dolgikh formed a MIu commission to inspect Pechorlag's operations. Perhaps not surprisingly, the findings of the group echoed those of the earlier MVD commission to a remarkable degree. Once again, investigators criticized Pechorlag administrators for mixing categories of prisoners, for not separating counterrevolutionary and especially dangerous prisoners from inmates sentenced for everyday crimes. The fourth camp division where Ivanov resided remained a site of bloodshed, as one large violent outbreak resulted in 24 dead and 25 injured prisoners.<sup>102</sup> The Gulag officials who investigated this violence described the work of gangs of dangerous criminal offenders. Like those who assessed the camp's operations a few months earlier, they blamed Pechorlag's leadership for failing to observe instructions of the Gulag and the Ministry regarding the proper detention and isolation of the camp's most dangerous elements.<sup>103</sup> Once again, the problems with violent prisoners were pinned on camp administrators.

Following Stalin's death, Beria openly criticized many features of the penal camp system and, on March 27, 1953, he initiated an amnesty in which over a million prisoners were freed.<sup>104</sup> Beria's admiring son would later write that his father "considered that the Gulag was the most unproductive thing ever invented" and "would have liked to do away with the entire system of forced labour."<sup>105</sup> What Beria really thought remains a mystery, but if his amnesty was informed in any way by what he learned about camp operations just prior to Stalin's death, then Ivanov might have been vindicated after all. Perhaps the prisoner was freed from Pechorlag as a result of Beria's amnesty and wondered whether his letter had anything to do with it.

## NOTES

1. I am very grateful to Steven Barnes, Frederick Corney, James Heinzen, Julie Hessler, Kiril Tomoff, and the anonymous reviewer for their insightful comments on an earlier draft. This research was supported by a Campbell National Fellowship at the Hoover Institution.
2. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 4.
3. The Russian term "*signal*" is defined as "a warning about something undesirable that may happen, a putting on guard." See Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s," *The Journal of Modern History* 68 (December 1996): 831.
4. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 4.
5. In 1952, Pechorlag's *spetsotdel* received 12,017 prisoner petitions and complaints, and an additional 13,989 requests for clemency (*zhaloby o pomilovanii*). GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 12–13.
6. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 154, 171.
7. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 137.

8. Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*. Trans. Vadim A. Staklo (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 191. Khlevniuk writes that under Beria's leadership, "Most of the torturers of the Great Terror stayed with the NKVD and pursued successful careers," 195.
9. Nicolas Werth, "A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union," in Stephane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, et al., *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 238, 241.
10. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1909, l. 99–128.
11. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia," *The Journal of Modern History* 65 (December 1993): 745–770; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Problem of Class Identity in NEP Society," in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, eds. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).
12. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 150, 168.
13. J. Otto Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930–1953* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997), 43.
14. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 212–307.
15. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 157.
16. On the development of the labor camp system in Komi ASSR, see Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Random House, 2003), 77–84; *Politicheskie repressii v Komi i na severe Rossii: organizatory i zhertry* (Syktyvkar, 2006); N.A. Morozov, *Gulag v Komi krai 1929–1956* (Syktyvkar, 1997).
17. Applebaum, *Gulag*, 78.
18. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 169. The oldest of the three camps, Sevzheldorlag, like the better-known Vorkutlag, was created following the reorganization of Ukhtpchlag in 1938. Sevdvinlag and Sevpechlag were established shortly thereafter in 1940 and placed under the authority of the NKVD's Chief Administration of Camps for Railroad Construction. In July 1950, Sevzheldorlag combined with Sevpechlag to form Pechorlag. See *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923–1960: Spravochnik* (Moscow, 1998), 354–355, 380–381, 385, 387–388, 498–99; A.B. Bezborodov and V.M. Khrustalev, eds. *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga, tom 4, naseleniia Gulaga* (Moscow, 2004), 72.
19. The camp expanded rapidly, from nearly 4000 prisoners at its founding, to over 34,000 in January 1941, and over 100,000 in January 1942. At the same time, prisoners' living conditions were abysmal and produced exceptionally high rates of mortality, illness and disability. See Khlevniuk, *History of the Gulag*, 238–9, 251–252, 360; *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR*, 387–388; Alan Barenberg, *From Prison Camp to Mining Town: The Gulag and Its Legacy in Vorkuta, 1938–1965* (Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007), 54–55.
20. May 9, 1940 resolution "O stroitel'stve Severo-Pechorskoi zheleznodorozhnoi magistrali i o razvitii Vorkuto-Pechorskikh uglei" published in *Pokaianie: Komi respublikanskii martirolog zherstv massovykh politicheskikh repressii*, vol 2 (Syktyvkar, 1999), 141; Khlevniuk, *History of the Gulag*, 238–9.
21. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 42, l. 41.

22. Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, III–IV. Trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), 221, 549.
23. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 212.
24. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 169, 212.
25. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 213.
26. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 169.
27. Lynne Viola, *Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
28. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 158, 217–218.
29. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 159, 167–168, 170, 221–223. On the general practice of hiring former prisoners as camp staff, see “Spravka GULAGa o zasorennosti kadrov GULAG” of March 10, 1945, “O poriadke ispol'zovaniia zakliuchennykh na nizovykh proizvodstvenno-administrativnykh dolzhnostiakh...” of 25 March 1950, and “O sostoianii raboty s kadrami v GULAG MVD SSSR” of January 7, 1953 in N.V. Petrov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga, tom 2, karatel'naia sistema* (Moscow, 2004), 252–253, 367–369, 403–408.
30. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 160–3.
31. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 164.
32. Deborah Kaple, *Gulag Boss: Memoir of Fyodor Vasilevich Mochulsky* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press, November 2010), Chapter 6.
33. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 165.
34. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 162.
35. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1909, l. 133–136, 161–168.
36. See, for example, Marta Craveri and Oleg Khlevniuk, “Krizis ekonomiki MVD (konets 1940-kh- 1950-e gody),” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 36 (1995): 179–190; Galina Mikhailovna Ivanova, *Istoriia GULAGa, 1918–1958: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskii i politiko-pravovoi aspekty* (Moscow, 2006), 384; Werth, “A State against Its People,” 241; Steven A. Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined: The Gulag in the Karaganda Region of Kazakhstan, 1930s–1950s” (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2003), 279–281.
37. Ivanova, *Istoriia GULAGa*, 385.
38. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 166.
39. Ivanova, *Istoriia GULAGa*, 384.
40. In addition, prisoners were not meeting their plan target because the camp administration “had not created the conditions for prisoners to fulfill the norm,” that is, they failed to ensure that materials and instruments were on hand, or provide transportation to the work site. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 166.
41. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 163, 167.
42. Although the labor regime in Pechorlag's special camp divisions was supposed to be especially severe, MVD investigators complained that there was no work for the prisoners there. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 224.
43. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 168.
44. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 160, 214.
45. On April 1, 1952 the camp held 37,471 prisoners as compared to 47,001 on January 1, 1953. See Morozov, *Gulag v Komi*, 137; GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 213.
46. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 164, 212.
47. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 154, 171–2.
48. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 158, 214.

49. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 158, 216, 165.
50. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
51. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 214, 223–224.
52. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 156.
53. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 4.
54. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 4.
55. The tension that such perceptions generated for many individuals is explored at length in Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
56. On the ShIZO or punishment cells, see Applebaum, *Gulag*, 242–247; Jacques Rossi, *The Gulag Handbook: An Encyclopedia Dictionary of Soviet Penitentiary Institutions and Terms Related to the Forced Labor Camps*, Trans. William A. Burhans (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 374.
57. Poem by Anna Petrovna Zborovskaia in Veronica Shapovalov, ed. and trans., *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 287.
58. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1963), 133.
59. Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation, I-II*. Trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), 116.
60. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 5.
61. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 6.
62. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 173.
63. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 5.
64. Rossi, *Gulag Handbook*, 54.
65. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 5.
66. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 5.
67. Rossi, *Gulag Handbook*, 374.
68. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 6.
69. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 55 (Spring, 1996): 94. Ivanov was probably reading Pechorlag’s newspaper, “Na poliarnuiu magistrāl’”, and this periodical looked a lot like *Pravda* in the early 1950s. See GARF f. 9414, op. 4, d. 165.
70. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 5.
71. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 7.
72. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 7.
73. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 58.
74. Such instability apparently existed across the Gulag system. As Nicholas Werth tells us, a January 1952 conference of Gulag commanders in Moscow acknowledged that camp authorities were losing ground in their battle against prisoner gangs. See Werth, “A State against Its People,” 239.
75. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 68.
76. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 69.
77. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 160.
78. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 163.
79. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 150.
80. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 161.
81. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 166.



82. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 154–155, 172–173.
83. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 173.
84. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 156.
85. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 173–174.
86. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 174.
87. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 174.
88. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 154–155, 173–174.
89. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 5, 174–175.
90. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 154–155, 175, 172.
91. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 155, 173.
92. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 150.
93. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 137, 150–151.
94. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 169.
95. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 175–176.
96. Kaple, *Gulag Boss*, Chapter 9.
97. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1909, l. 134.
98. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1909, l. 141.
99. Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians In Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 196–197.
100. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1908, l. 170.
101. On April 2, 1953, the authority over Pechorlag was transferred from GULZhDS to GULAG MIu, and the number of prisoners declined sharply, from roughly 47,000 in 1953 to just over 23,000 in 1954 and around 7300 in 1957. *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR*, 354–355; Morozov, *Gulag v Komi*, 140–145.
102. V.A. Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga, tom 6, vosstaniia, bynty i zabastovki zakliuchennykh* (Moscow, 2004), 581–585.
103. Kozlov, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*, 586–590.
104. On Beria's amnesty, see Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945–1953* (Oxford, 2004), 131–133; Ivanova, *Istoriia GULAGa*, 387; Applebaum, *Gulag*, 478–83; A. Artizov, Iu. Sigachev, I. Shevchuk, and V. Khlopov, eds., *Reabilitatsiia: kak eto bylo* (Moscow, 2000), 16–18.
105. Sergo Beria, *Beria, My Father: Inside Stalin's Kremlin* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2001), 45.

## CHAPTER 11

# FOUNDING FATHERS/ICONIC SOVIETS: PUBLIC IDENTITY, SOVIET MYTHOLOGY, AND THE FASHIONING OF SCIENCE HEROES IN SOVIET TIMES

*James T. Andrews*

### INTRODUCTION: SOVIET IDENTITY POLITICS, MYTHOLOGY, AND ROCKETRY

While Khrushchev's regime orchestrated a myriad of celebratory public spectacles after the launching of Sputnik I in 1957, actually the publicizing of Soviet technological accomplishments began earlier in a more nascent, inchoate form in the Stalin era. This is even true of the popular reception, interest, and the resonance of space culture prior to the great feats of the Khrushchev era. In fact, one of Khrushchev's posthumous poster-boys for Soviet glory, Konstantin E. Tsiolkovskii, was also heralded by Stalin much earlier as the great inventor of spaceflight and rocketry. So if Khrushchev's regime propagated the myth, it was Stalin who had initiated the "founding father" (of spaceflight) concept, namely, during the beginning of competition with the West amidst the resurgence of Greater Russian nationalism in the 1930s. Indeed, in the final years of his long life, Konstantin E. Tsiolkovskii, the self-taught Russian math and physics teacher, was sanctioned by Stalin and the Central Committee of the Communist Party to give a speech from his provincial home in Kaluga where he researched and taught for the majority of his life. This was certainly no ordinary speech, because this canonized local hero would be speaking on May Day, 1935, to those in attendance in Red Square (Communist dignitaries, including Stalin himself); but his taped speech was also broadcasted throughout the former Soviet Union. Both Stalin, and later Khrushchev, would use the figure of Tsiolkovskii to focus on the superiority of Soviet technology over Western capitalism and its scientific system. However, both during this speech and at times prior to this event, Tsiolkovskii used these Soviet public venues to promote his own ideas about the future possibility of spaceflight. This speech was given

while impressive Soviet airplanes flew above Red Square, and Tsiolkovskii described them as “steel dragonflies,” which were only a tip of a more profound iceberg.<sup>1</sup>

Soviet era scholars have focused on Tsiolkovskii as a visionary technical genius and elaborated on the mathematical contributions he added to our understanding of the possibility of rocket and spaceflight, labeling him the father (or grandfather cosmos, *Ded kosmosa*) of the Russian space program.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, they point to the countless celebratory conferences during the Khrushchev era, especially the regime’s support of Tsiolkovskii’s centennial (1957), as evidence of his significance as a national hero. Yet there has recently been a completely opposing, revisionist tendency of Russian space historians to deconstruct his scientific legacy.<sup>3</sup> Those cynics see his heralded narrative as a fabricated myth, created by the Bolshevik regime as part of their paradigm to canonize indigenous local scientists.

This chapter will investigate, using Tsiolkovskii (and rocket enthusiasts) as a case study, the process of invented identity and thus the Soviet ritual of “constructed mythology.” Namely, how did the regime create a national hero out of Tsiolkovskii, and what does this tell us about the ascribed nature of public identity in Soviet Russia. This study will also try to deconstruct that stereotype in a different manner than the critics of Tsiolkovskii’s scientific legacy. I will try to show how he himself also cultivated his own “public” image as not simply the earliest Soviet citizen to conceive of spaceflight and theorize about multistage rockets. He wanted his image to be more than the myopic intended picture drawn by the regime, since he also saw himself as a theorist interested in spreading information about spaceflight to the public in palpable, understandable form (thus a public educator or popularizer, and one who inspires future physicists to create what he could only envisage). Therefore this chapter ultimately investigates the process of self-fashioning from below, and constructed public identity from above, as well as their nuanced points of intersection in Soviet times. It thus uses the Tsiolkovskii and rocket-inventors story as a prism to understand broader trends in mythology, identity, and science during Soviet times.

## TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF SOVIET CONSTRUCTED NARRATIVES: FASHIONING IDENTITIES, ICONIC TYPOLOGIES, AND FOUNDING FATHER MYTHOLOGIES

Though mythic ritual is a fascinating point of analysis to understand how Soviet scientists were canonized by the regime, these central, statist (ascribed) narratives only reflect on how Soviet figures are memorialized and “identified” from above. Narratives in Soviet times were constructed mythological paradigms that served as models to follow no matter the specific intricacies of a particular scientific case study. Konstantin Tsiolkovskii may have indeed been a technical visionary, as well as a “poster boy” for Soviet technical superiority; yet ultimately, like many Soviet scientists, he was an agent of his own destiny, while “fashioning” his public image as well. Throughout his

career across the revolutionary divide, he was dedicated to developing public discourse on rocket science and spaceflight at the local and national levels. He even cultivated his own voluntary scientific networks in the 1920s that served as conduits for his ideas outside of official circles. Tsiolkovskii was also a dedicated teacher in provincial Russia, who used a variety of means to popularize his ideas independently, while simultaneously cultivating the support of regional societies, the local educational bureaucracy, and the top echelons of the Soviet regime itself. Furthermore, life histories, such as that of Tsiolkovskii, also reflect on how those in local areas could subvert, if not avoid, the organizational structures of the centralized state and its bureaucratic impulses. Lastly, these stories tell us much about just how developed local scientific culture was during Soviet times, particularly outside of the overly studied centralized, scientific institutes and academies.

Tsiolkovskii thus both naturally took on multiple personalities, as well as constructed state typologies (i.e., Soviet science autodidact hero) in the Soviet era, while simultaneously fashioning those identities himself from below in the locale. As Sheila Fitzpatrick reminds us, in her book *Tear off the Masks!*, in the Soviet context, individuals “always had multiple identities, that is, self-identifications that mark their location in the world and relationship to other people.”<sup>4</sup> Both a local and national hero, Tsiolkovskii (and his constructed image) offer the researcher of modern Russian culture and politics a chance to frame these “multiple identities” in Soviet history within the context of this iconic figure’s life, as well as understand the public ramifications of his visionary conceptualizations.

Over the years, social psychologists, such as Rom Harre, and more recently political scientists, such as David Laitin, have argued that individuals fashion their identities based not only on cultural norms, but in the historical context and sociopolitical parameters they lived within.<sup>5</sup> David Laitin, a political scientist who worked on the Baltic States and linguistics, argues that social identity can be constructed; yet he also believes the historical context in which actors live also defines the parameters within which they can fashion their lives so to speak.<sup>6</sup> Within the framework of these social scientists’ theories of identity formation, one can argue Tsiolkovskii fashioned his own “Soviet” identity within the sociopolitical context of Stalin’s times, and that identity then was mythologized by Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership after 1964.

Jochen Hellbeck, in analyzing Stalin era diaries and identity formation, has focused on the formulation of a unique Soviet “subjective” mindset when revolutionaries forged their identity within the context of Stalin’s times.<sup>7</sup> Hellbeck has focused particularly, using Foucault’s perspective on individual subjects as actors, on how ideology in Soviet society worked as a creator of individual experience and one’s own identity. While engaging new works, such as Hellbeck’s, frame complex approaches to identity formation in Soviet society, studies such as his may also leave out an understanding of Soviet actors who, while engaging the Soviet state with laudatory messages and pleas, may not have felt a part of the holistic project of reshaping

humanity that Hellbeck writes about in his work. Furthermore, it neglects to see some actors who actually (and ironically), in Foucaultian terms, understood both the constraints and benefits of certain institutions (capitalist or socialist), and as actors knew these structures had to be deftly navigated.<sup>8</sup> The Tsiolkovskii story may thus fall more into the pattern, to some extent (yet not completely), outlined by Sheila Fitzpatrick, in her above highlighted work on identity formation, *Tear off the Masks!*<sup>9</sup> Fitzpatrick herself, however, is methodologically interested in social rather than personal identity; in her words “the way people locate themselves in a social or group context rather than the way they think about” the process.<sup>10</sup>

Analyzing the process of identity formation in highly politicized cultures, particularly from above, is also critical to pinpointing the ritual nature of this fashioning of a life story. Part of this process of canonization of local science heroes in the Stalin era, as Nikolai Krementsov reminds us, was part of the ritual of “founding father” narratives in Soviet science.<sup>11</sup> These were generally ascribed by the state from above in order to create a paradigm for modeling, as well as to compete with the Western capitalist world’s great figures in similar disciplines. In his work on the polar north in Stalin’s times, John McCannon saw this process unfold with what he called “positive, mythic heroes” such as Otto Schmidt.<sup>12</sup> These figures, like Tsiolkovskii and Schmidt, may be better understood, to twist Kremenstov’s theoretical framework somewhat, as “grandfathers of science,” while Stalin can be seen as the “great father” not to be displaced from that technological and scientific shrine. Stalin thus can be seen as the choreographer, organizer, and ultimately editor of these scientific canons and founding grandfather narratives.<sup>13</sup> The Soviet regime, while playing this curatorial role (arranging its canonical figures), also must enter into a negotiated process with the figure themselves or their legacy.

Yet whether these canonized heroes are part of a greater process of ascribed identity or not, their engagement with the state in fashioning that image is complex and not necessarily a top-down process. This is particularly true in Tsiolkovskii’s case, since though he thanked the regime for its financial support, he did not always view himself within the context of the new Soviet “local hero” model ascribed to him by the state. Ultimately what I want to argue here is that the new “Soviet hero/heroine” is envisaged from above, formulated from below, and contested from without (especially in the locales). This is particularly true of those like Tsiolkovskii, and so many countless scientists and technical figures, who brought prerevolutionary baggage with them to the revolution. Maybe it is better to understand this process as riddled with ambiguity on the part of the person being canonized, as well as their complex relationship with the state in fashioning or mythologizing about their public identity. As Natalia Kozlova has argued, Soviet identity stories are filled with ambiguity in the early Stalin period prior to World War II especially. Citizens, appealing to authority, while living in Soviet Russia, generally wrote themselves into the larger political metanarrative; but also, as Kozlova reminds us, “the result never coincides

with the expectation of power.”<sup>14</sup> In essence, this created a system of mutual understanding between patron (Stalin and the Soviet state) and supplicant (Tsiolkovskii), and does not necessitate that the ideological underpinnings of that system be completely adopted and assimilated as dogma by the recipient of the gift. In this view, I would argue the supplicant’s role, with respect to the Soviet state, is much more engaging, ambiguous, and interactive than usually meets the eye.

### LIFE, RESEARCH, AND TEACHING ACROSS THE REVOLUTIONARY DIVIDE, 1857–1928

Tsiolkovskii was born in 1857. His mother was a Russian of Tatar background, while his father, a forester by trade, was a Pole from Lithuania. When he was ten years old, Tsiolkovskii contracted scarlet fever, and for the next four to six years had medical troubles that forced him to teach himself scientific principles at home. From an early age, he became very adept at making scientific models of machines, and showed a great interest in outer space and science fiction. In 1873, at the young age of sixteen, Tsiolkovskii went to Moscow where his father had sent him in the hope of entering technical school. The early bout with scarlet fever had severely impaired his hearing, thus he was forced to teach himself science in Russia’s national library under the guidance of a well-known philosopher of the time N. F. Fedorov. Some philosophers of science have argued that Fedorov influenced Tsiolkovskii to consider the possibility of spaceflight and inhabiting other worlds.<sup>15</sup>

In the revolutionary era, Tsiolkovskii would then briefly be associated with a group of scientists who saw themselves as Fedorov’s disciples, amateur philosophers called the “biocosmists.” This group included the very famous earth geologist/scientist Vladimir Vernadskii.<sup>16</sup> The biocosmists believed that through interplanetary travel, humans could find immortality and a type of quasisalvation. Although a bizarre philosophical stance, it emphasized their belief in the power and transformative quality that outer space travel would have on the human race. The biocosmists also included Leonid Krasin (committee organizer of the Lenin mausoleum) and Valerian Muraviev (member of the Central Institute of Labor in Moscow), a devout follower of Fredrick Taylor and Fedorov combined. The biocosmists could aptly be described as millenarians and utopians, as they had a belief in the unbound ability of man to transform nature as well as explore and colonize the cosmos. These biocosmists also formed a loose network of academics, bureaucrats, and visionaries who all believed in the transformative nature of outer space in the event the planet were to be overcrowded and uninhabitable at a future point in time.<sup>17</sup> In essence, therefore, their ideas were based on the Malthusian principle that the earth was overcrowded, and would need some kind of vehicle to rejuvenate and perpetuate eternal human life. Their mentor Fedorov’s emphasis was on a notion of reincarnation of human souls, and this could maintain itself by conquering and filling the void of the cosmos in its ever-expanding infinity.

In the 1870s and 1880s, Fedorov was known for mentoring informally in libraries in Moscow a number of students, many of whom were impoverished like Tsiolkovskii. This enabled Tsiolkovskii to temporarily come into contact with a group of mentors and students alike in Moscow who were interested in cosmic, scientific, and philosophical issues similar to his. They sometimes met at the national library in the old capital that would eventually become the building blocks of the collection of the Lenin Library near the *Manezh* stables of the old Tsarist regime. These informal study groups, networks, and circles (*kruzhki*) were critical to the birth of new scientific ideas in Russia. It was particularly important to those students who, like Tsiolkovskii, for a variety of reasons, could not attend formal educational institutions of higher learning in Tsarist Russia. The generative quality of these circles in the formation of unconventional and new scientific and technical ideas has generally been overlooked. This is especially true in the history of rocketry and spaceflight prior to the twentieth century, when ideas of interplanetary travel, especially in underdeveloped countries such as Russia, seemed fantastical or naively futuristic.<sup>18</sup>

In 1878, Tsiolkovskii returned home with the hope of eventually teaching in the natural sciences in district primary schools near Kaluga. In 1879, he passed the extramural courses to teach arithmetic and geometry in secondary schools, and in January of 1880 he was placed in Borovsk for twelve years to teach science until 1891. The local educational archival records, written by school inspectors and superintendents, portray Tsiolkovskii as an enthusiastic teacher who conveyed both the basics to pupils as well as some of his visions of exploring space.<sup>19</sup> It is during these early years, after school, where he began to draw astronomical designs, sketch asteroids, and pictures of people living and floating in a weightless world. He also conducted experiments on the effect of gravitational acceleration with a primitive rotary machine he constructed, while also creating models of his dirigibles.<sup>20</sup>

On February 4, 1892, Tsiolkovskii was transferred to teach arithmetic in the Kaluga local school district. From the winter of 1892 until his death in 1935, Tsiolkovskii would remain in Kaluga. Kaluga was a provincial city in Russia, some two hundred kilometers from Moscow on the banks of the Oka River. Tsiolkovskii lived in a small house on Georgievskaiia Street that also served as his laboratory.<sup>21</sup> It is here in Kaluga where his most famous pieces on rocketry were written, such as his 1903 "Investigations of World Space By Reactive Vehicles." In that particular work, he had devised and sketched a rocket of enormous dimensions using liquid fuel (hydrogen and oxygen) as a propellant.<sup>22</sup> There were other theorists in Russia prior to World War I (such as A. Gorokhov and M. M. Pomortsov), whose legacy was also hidden at the time to the international scientific community, who examined the notion of pneumatic rocketry prior to the era of Robert Goddard's and Hermann Obert's discoveries in America and Germany, respectively. This points to the importance of early Russian theoretical and conceptual plans in the history of spaceflight as a critical link in our understanding of aerospace technology over time, which contradicts the cold war era pronouncements by Khrushchev's regime about the catalytic nature of Yuri Gagarin's

achievements. Clearly Russian theorists had been analyzing rocket designs well before the post-World War II Soviet technicians were creating capsules for cosmonauts to defy the earth's gravitational forces. Furthermore, like Tsiolkovskii, they highlighted conceptually the importance of liquid fuel as a propellant in multistage rocketry.

Tsiolkovskii himself continued to teach and research in Kaluga up through the upheavals of the 1917 revolutionary era. After the February and October Revolutions, he began to rely mainly on his meager pension from the local school board, until in October of 1918 he began teaching at Soviet school #6 in Kaluga at the secondary level.<sup>23</sup> He taught physics, math, chemistry, and astronomy at the local Soviet secondary school until he retired from teaching completely on October 15, 1921.<sup>24</sup> Between 1921 and 1935, the Soviet government also gave him an honorary stipend that supplemented his educational pension, and allowed him to survive until his death in 1935.<sup>25</sup>

During the civil war, in late 1918, the Soviet state elected Tsiolkovskii a member of the Socialist Academy of Social Sciences (later renamed the Communist Academy). The academy was founded in June of 1918 as a center for the development of Marxist interpretations of society, and had a small section for the study of the natural sciences where Tsiolkovskii belonged.<sup>26</sup> The traditional perspective was that the Soviet state independently cultivated their patronage ties to Tsiolkovskii. However, archival letters tell a different story, one of a wise old man rhetorically fashioning his utilitarian virtues as a scientist who could benefit the new Soviet state.

On August 1, 1918, two months after its initial founding, Tsiolkovskii sent an unsolicited letter to the scientific-academic section of the new Socialist Academy of Social Studies. In this letter, he explained how he had toiled as a lower and middle school teacher for 38 years, while conducting experiments of flight in his laboratory in provincial Kaluga on his own time. He stressed how everything in his laboratory was hand-made, and he was now surviving on a meager pension of 27 rubles with supplements from his daughter's salary to make ends meet. Tsiolkovskii's rhetorical strategy for the time was complex. He tried to refashion his early theories on monism and universal matter in a way to argue that they were really part of a grand theory to study ideal social questions similar to the Marxist ideology of the Bolsheviks. However, he bemoaned the fact that his early works, published before the Russian Revolution, were edited during a period of strong Tsarist censorship, while his ideas back then were considered bizarre and strange by most of his critics. Appealing to a new patron, he summarized, "I plea to you to give me the monetary sustenance to finish my work... I need to have my work better known amongst the people of Soviet Russia."<sup>27</sup>

His letter is a fascinating document rhetorically since he portrayed himself as a self-taught thinker who made all his apparatuses by hand. Furthermore, Tsiolkovskii said he was neglected by many prerevolutionary scientists who had more elaborate laboratories than he had. In his letter, he reiterated how the central academic institutions of Tsarist Russia ostracized him, particularly because of his unconventional ideas. He portrayed himself also as someone



who thought about socialist-oriented philosophical tracts before 1917, therefore trying to ally himself, in this case literally for monetary gain, with the socialist orientation of the new academy. (Tsiolkovskii, however, was never, unlike one of his Socialist-Revolutionary daughters, allied with any political movement or party before the October Revolution.) Tsiolkovskii was in retrospect quite clever in portraying himself to the Bolshevik Academy as someone who was ostracized during the time of the Tsars, a poor provincial scientist, yet simultaneously as someone who was ready to serve the new regime.<sup>28</sup> Tsiolkovskii clearly understood how to petition the new regime, and to some extent fit the role of supplicant to the new authorities. His relationship with the Bolsheviks would be complex, however, since he both believed the regime supported untraditional technical inventors and scientists, though he also did not see himself in truth as part of the new Soviet hagiographic model.

In essence, he rewrote his *avtobiografiia* (autobiography), composing a "Soviet" one for official consumption. Sheila Fitzpatrick has argued recently that in the Soviet period, individuals undertook a process of "self-fashioning" in order to fit their own life histories into the greater social fabric and narrative constructed by the state.<sup>29</sup> In essence, this is almost a process of role-playing, as one presents oneself in public to fit state constructed public identities.<sup>30</sup> The sociologist Erving Goffman has extensively analyzed the process of role-playing by individuals in public settings. The Soviet process of fashioning relates to Erving Goffman's work on presentation of the self, since he argues that we are actors taking on roles and identities we construct. Tsiolkovskii's self-fashioning and plea was deftly constructed, and within a month's time he was elected as a corresponding member of the new Socialist Academy, given a stipend to continue some of his work in his laboratory and workshop in Kaluga, and informed that he could come to Moscow to use the academy's library and book collections if he needed them.<sup>31</sup>

During the 1920s, as a retired teacher with government funding and support, Tsiolkovskii became more active in independently promoting and popularizing his ideas about space travel. Rocket science and space travel were only part of a more general interest on the part of the Russian reader during the 1920s in astronomy, the cosmos, and the exploration of the solar system itself. Long lines for public disputations on planets, the solar system, and the universe beyond were recorded at various museums in Moscow such as the Polytechnic. Tsiolkovskii's ideas thus fell on an eager audience in the capital and provincial cities alike.<sup>32</sup> Russians were especially captivated at this time with notes on airflight and dirigibles, so much so that Tsiolkovskii spent as much time writing popular pamphlets on these topics as he did on rocket flight itself.<sup>33</sup>

Many theorists were also interested in Tsiolkovskii's ideas and helped promote them in popular journals, periodicals, and the Soviet press. Probably the best-known popularizer of space travel and astronomy during the 1920s was the Leningrad physics teacher, journalist, and editor of popular journals, Iakov I. Perel'man. Thanks to Perel'man's initiative, Tsiolkovskii's theories and drawings about rockets were featured in many popular-scientific journals

during the 1920s.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Tsiolkovskii wrote voluminous science fiction novellas that contained narratives serving two purposes: to entertain while they didactically taught the public about rocketry and space travel.<sup>35</sup>

Tsiolkovskii, in the 1920s, also gave public scientific lectures in Kaluga and its environs on a host of topics that interested local residents. These talks, though diverse, focused on space and the cosmos, and were sponsored by local regional studies groups. These *kraeved* (regional studies) societies in the Russian provinces were especially interested in dispersing utilitarian scientific knowledge to the public, while simultaneously wetting the appetite of an eager provincial public fascinated by the prospects of humans traveling into outer space.<sup>36</sup> Thus, by the late 1920s, and Stalin's ascension to power, Tsiolkovskii's name was slowly becoming a household word in Soviet Russia as the inspirational focus of Russian cosmonautics. Encouraged by students and local societies on the provincial level from below, patronized from above by editors, scientists and the Soviet state itself, yet consistently promoting himself across the revolutionary divide, Tsiolkovskii and his ideas attempted to transcend over time generational, cultural, and educational barriers as they entered the public sphere.

### FROM FOUNDING FATHER TO *DED KOSMOSA* (GRANDFATHER SPACE): CELEBRATING AND MEMORIALIZING TSIOLKOVSKII UNDER STALIN AND KHRUSHCHEV'S REGIMES, 1928–1964

In Stalin's Russia, from his home in Kaluga, Tsiolkovskii tried to shape his identity as educator of the people (see Photo I), with a close connection to the locale and his students. He had endless photos taken of himself as inventor, working diligently in his laboratory where he also wrote his voluminous tracts. The photo of him (self-portrait), with peasant kaftan, projected his own almost Tolstoyan image of the enlightened intellectual spreading technical knowledge to the people independently. In this frame, he saw himself as part of a long tradition of Russian science and technological popularizers. Furthermore, this connected him to the prerevolutionary mission of mass education that the Bolsheviks themselves embraced in different ways.

Yet as the Stalinist state evolved in the late 1920s and 1930s, Tsiolkovskii was more consistently called on to serve as a poster boy for the regime as his picture appeared on the pages of newspapers and journals alongside collective farm workers (see Photo II), pioneers and Komsomol groups, students, and aeronautical technical societies. *Pravda* photographers made pilgrimages to Kaluga to capture the aged inventor as is depicted by this classic photo of him among *kolkhozniki*. His image and public identity, therefore, was slowly being shaped as the "founding father" of cosmonautics, whose eclectic talents as educator, specialist, and lecturer made him eventually a ubiquitous Soviet household name.<sup>37</sup>

To some extent, he himself fostered that official identity, since he had taken part in soliciting funding from the state back in 1918, though he



**Photo I** Photograph/Self Portrait—1920s era—of Tsiolkovskii in his workshop in Kaluga located on second floor of his home. Photo courtesy of Russian Academy of Sciences Archive in Moscow. From ARAN, fond 555, op.2, d.129, l.1.

simultaneously resisted being fully coopted by the Soviet state for sheer propagandistic purposes. In an editorial in *Komsomolskaia Pravda* in July of 1935, entitled “Is This Mere Fantasy,” he argued that his popular tracts and science fiction novels had a purpose to inspire future physicists to create rockets of superior design to his own, and to help cultivate a public mind-set that would support funding these projects. He insisted these were the words of a universal, public educator dreaming of spaceflight, and his words were devoid of Soviet jargon or phraseology. Furthermore, near his death, he realized the need for integration and international cooperation in space research, while his novels and science fiction consistently had a variety of characters from many capitalist and socialist countries working together to create international cooperation in space.<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, the regime, to some extent, saw this as a nationalistic opportunity to boast. Tsiolkovskii was thus asked to give the famous 1935 May Day speech about rocketry from Red Square as a Soviet hero, and when he died on



**Photo II** Photograph of Tsiolkovskii with Collective Farmers near Kaluga oblast in 1935—year of his death. Photo taken by unknown Pravda photographer. Photo courtesy of Russian Academy of Sciences Archive in Moscow. From ARAN, fond 555, op.2, d.149, l.57.

September 19, 1935 his funeral in Kaluga was a Soviet public spectacle with local throngs and Soviet government representatives alike hailing his virtues in memorial speeches given in Lenin Square in Kaluga. Stalin sent official condolences and letters to Tsiolkovskii's remaining family members, and sent dignitaries from the party (A. Kiselev was sent from the Central Committee in Moscow, VTsIK) to Kaluga to mourn his loss. As evidenced in the presidential archival records of Russia, Tsiolkovskii had actually sent Stalin several letters six days prior to his death, one of which bequeathed his entire diary, hand-written notes, and manuscripts to the Communist Party archives for further use by researchers. In another letter, Tsiolkovskii again cleverly told Stalin how it was really only after the 1917 Revolution that his ideas were more accepted and realized only with the help of the Communist Party.<sup>39</sup>

On the September 20, the day of the funeral, A. Kiselev from Moscow gave the official Party memorial speech, while the head of the Kaluga Raikom (Treivas) gave the memorial speech that followed.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, an official Communist Party style obituary appeared prominently in *Pravda* on September 20, 1935, further substantiating the preeminent position that Stalin placed on Tsiolkovskii's image in Soviet history. Both the eulogies at the funeral and the *Pravda* official obituary focused on how Tsiolkovskii was a "man of the people" and an autodidact; in essence this made his scientific feats more special and "Soviet."<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey Brooks, in his seminal work on the Soviet press and public culture, has argued that these eulogies were part of the theatrics of Soviet state propaganda. Brooks argues that this role-play between patron (Stalin) and recipient of "the gift" (Tsiolkovskii) was part of an elaborate construct of state mythology. Yet, Brooks does not necessarily

recognize how those such as Tsiolkovskii constructed and fashioned their own identities from below within these political frameworks.<sup>42</sup> In Tsiolkovskii's case, he actually believed he was ostracized by the Russian scientific elite of Tsarist times, while he did not completely envisage himself in official Soviet terms either. Furthermore, in this case, the official Soviet obituary incorporated some of Tsiolkovskii's own autobiographical fashioning as a so-called Soviet "grass roots" teacher. The Soviet obituary thus ironically appropriated the autobiographical material that Tsiolkovskii himself created back in 1918 when he appealed to the Socialist Academy for monetary patronage. So the "official" obituary was constructed and shaped from above, embellished and fashioned from below, while imbibed with truths and half-truths from both constituencies (state and supplicant) alike.

The role of obituaries of famous people in cultural history can vary depending on the type of political culture in which they are generated. This is particularly true in Stalin and Khrushchev's Soviet Russia. Obituaries have usually been portrayed, as mentioned above in the work of Brooks, as eulogies that are part of elaborately constructed anthropological rituals of the state. In this case, the Soviet state appropriates the local science hero as one of its own at the national level, serving their life story to the public in an idealized format for constrained consumption. However, what has generally been left out of this analysis, and is true in the case of one such as Tsiolkovskii, is how the mythologized figure played a role in the construction of the stereotypical autobiography in the first place. Furthermore, one such as Tsiolkovskii believed in the state's support of autodidacts, yet at the same time knew how to work that state for more basic ends such as financial support. So the obituary does not reveal on the surface this process of engagement, navigation, symbiosis, and role-play that the supplicant willingly develops within the rigid parameters offered to them by the state. Analysis of the content of the obituary alone, without an understanding of the generative process, leaves out the element of fashioning and self-fashioning and their interplay. I would argue, therefore, that a cultural analysis of prominent Soviet era obituaries must incorporate an evolutionary methodological approach that highlights these generative impulses from below by the supplicant to authority. Ultimately this can be defined more as an interactive process that involves synthetic elements from the state's perspective as well as the person being "deified" hagiographically.

Tsiolkovskii though, like all supplicants to power and authority, was certainly used by the regime, particularly posthumously for the purpose of creating a legendary figure in the Soviet science pantheon. Yet, as mentioned above, he believed in the new regime's support of nontraditional scientists. Though the Communist Party had started to mythologize Tsiolkovskii as a founding father of cosmonautics as far back as the 1930s, his legacy went somewhat dormant in the 1940s and early 1950s. However, fortuitously the launching of Sputnik in 1957 conveniently coincided with the centennial of his birth. The Khrushchev regime, and particularly the Soviet Academy of Sciences, decided to feature Tsiolkovskii in their celebratory ceremonies for

Sputnik's success by hosting centennial lectures and events in his honor. Thus Stalin's "founding father" of cosmonautics cleverly became Khrushchev's "grandfather space (*Ded kosmosa*)."

With the launching of Sputnik in 1957, as part of the myriad of celebratory events, a host of journals filled pages with laudatory articles on Soviet rocketry, the history of spaceflight, and the life of the new cosmonaut. They included eclectic journals such as *Ogonek* (Little flame), literary journals such as *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Literary journal), the Red Army's newspapers *Krasnaia zvezda* (Red Star), and even more politicized official ones such as *Kommunist* and *Partiinaia zhizn'* (Party life). Amy Neslon, in her recent work on space dogs such as "Laika," has argued that the Soviet military heavily publicized the feats of animals in the early cold war as part of the greater Soviet technological propaganda campaign in competition with the West.<sup>43</sup> Paul Josephson has argued that while most writers (and journalists) glorified Soviet achievements in space, there were the occasional letters to editors (which were actually published in newspapers such as *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*) that questioned the efficacy of the space effort; yet they were generally anomalies to the norm.<sup>44</sup>

Celebrations and mass rallies (particularly in Moscow), however, became an important site for the Soviet "masses" to become involved in the spectacle of display for Soviet cosmonautics. Josephson has noted in his research that planetariums hosted lectures on outer space, short stories for adults and children were written with exaggerated platitudes by writers, while Soviet composers created popular songs (especially short *chastushki*) to be sung to children at schools celebrating Sputnik.<sup>45</sup> Official institutions such as the Academy of Sciences, however, became the greatest proponents and conduits for disseminating more detailed public lectures on the significance of these achievements. In actuality, it was the real father of the Russian space program, S. P. Korolev, the director of the post-World War II Soviet rocket program, who was asked to direct these celebrations at the academy and give the 1957 keynote commemorative speech for the capstone series of events planned in Tsiolkovskii's honor.

Korolev was clearly directed by the academy to mythologize Tsiolkovskii's feats as the roots of great Soviet achievements. Indeed, many of the speeches honoring Tsiolkovskii claimed he was the first to conceive of multistage rocketry and spaceflight in general. In the 1940s during the war, but primarily after the war and into the 1950s, the Soviets made unsubstantiated claims of national priority in scientific discoveries. These claims ranged from the ludicrous assertion of the invention of the electric light, radio, and telegraph, to more specific scientific assertions that Soviet scientists discovered, for instance, a variety of disciplines such as structural chemistry.<sup>46</sup> In the case of Tsiolkovskii, however, Korolev (as well as other physicists) tried to simultaneously normalize Tsiolkovskii's achievements, and isolate his more concrete contributions, thus not completely glorifying his legacy. In the keynote 1957 commemorative speech at the academy's celebration, S. P. Korolev argued that Tsiolkovskii's equations and studies came to a number of cardinal

conclusions that were the basis of rudimentary technology in the rocketry of the Soviet 1950s and 1960s. He claimed that it was Tsiolkovskii who first advanced the notion that the velocity and hence range of a rocket increase by increasing the relative supply of explosives (propellant) carried by a rocket.<sup>47</sup> In his recent memoirs, the Soviet physicist and director of the former Soviet Space Research Institute, Roald Sagdeev, believes that in scientific terms Tsiolkovskii's series of equations on velocity were probably his greatest crowning achievement, and that earlier Soviet propaganda on Tsiolkovskii probably overshadowed this small, yet important technical fact. Sagdeev's subtle, yet important, point is that overt Soviet propagandizing of scientists' achievements often obscured or overshadowed (as in Tsiolkovskii's case) real technical contributions.<sup>48</sup> Thus within the framework of Korolev and Sagdeev's commentary on Tsiolkovskii's achievements, one must deconstruct the propagandistic claims of technical superiority and discovery asserted by the state, and reconstruct the subtle, yet more valid technical contributions of such a mythic figure. Yet when scientific legacies are constructed by states (in the West or East), these subtle contributions are sometimes lost in the larger deification process, as a pantheon of heroes is built into the greater metanarrative.

### EPILOGUE: A KERNEL OF INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY AS FOUND IN THE SOVIET MYTH

Tsiolkovskii's public legacy is complex since it was both created from above, while cultivated by the man himself from below. At several junctures in his long life, as noted above, this image intersected when a symbiosis between state and individual occurred. While his frank hand-written diary (or autobiographical) notes distanced himself from the scientific establishment of Tsarist Russia, he neither fully accepted his politicized role as a "Soviet visionary," and therefore founding father of a unique type of Soviet cosmonautics. Near his death in 1935, within the context of interviews he gave and editorials he wrote for the Soviet press, he seemed to fall back on his own personal motives and ends, that is, as an inspirer of individual physicists and engineers, popularizer of physics and public educator, and public interlocutor of the virtues of interplanetary spaceflight that included international cooperation. Though simultaneously, till days before his death, especially in letters to Stalin, he still thanked the Communist Party for helping to realize his dreams. He thus leaves us with this complex duality in his public image and identity.

Yet Tsiolkovskii's less "official," less politicized, dreams have been echoed in the countless memoirs of physicists and scientists who were personally touched by his science fiction novels, inventions, and popular articles. For instance, Valentin Glushko, designer of "Energiya" and many rocket engines that operated on Tsiolkovskii's dream of using liquid propellants, corresponded with Tsiolkovskii as a teenager and was inspired by his popular books.<sup>49</sup> Though they recognized his constructed, luminary identity (and its

politicized component), they recollected mostly their personal impressions as either children reading and deeply inspired by his works, or as young scientists making pilgrimages to Kaluga to see the “old man” who the locals still called the *chudak* (crank) of provincial Kaluga.<sup>50</sup>

The Russian etymological root “chud” perhaps leaves us with this binary identity of either visionary inspirational physicist or crank that the regime raised to glorifying heights to use as the base to construct its superstructural pantheon of heroes of Soviet cosmonautics.<sup>51</sup> Yet, in the end, it is the personal (private) and the public, as well as their nuanced points of intersection, which provide the eclectic realm to reconstruct a unique “multiple” Soviet identity as Tsiolkovskii’s. On some level, Tsiolkovskii also served to link the countryside (simple life of this provincial teacher/autodidact) with the sophisticated, urbane technological future. To some extent, his deification by the theocratic state became a quintessential official Soviet narrative of the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, yet one that he wrote, refashioned, and composed in his own individual manner as well, thus leaving Russians to this very day with varied opinions and conceptions of who he was and what his legacy actually means.

## NOTES

1. K. E. Tsiolkovskii, “Osushchestvlietsia mehta chelovechestva, Pervomaiskoe privetstvie K. E. Tsiolkovskogo na plenke,” Speech taped in his office/laboratory Kaluga, Russia, last week of April 1935. Speech transcribed in K. E. Tsiolkovskii, *Sbornik posviashchennyi pamiati znamenitogo deiatelia nauki* (Kaluga, 1935).
2. One can refer to A.A. Kosmodemianskii’s classic Khrushchev era biography of the physicist entitled *Konstantin Tsiolkovsky: His Life and Work*. However, this was a very narrow technical description of some of his hypotheses, with very little analytical, critical, or cultural dimensions in placing Tsiolkovskii’s life in the larger historical or technological context. See, A. A. Kosmodem’ianskii, *Konstantin E. Tsiolkovskii, 1857–1935* (Moscow, 1987).
3. Recently, some Russian specialists, in short newspaper editorials, have proposed a radical alternative that he was not a technical master of his field and was solely constructed as a genius by the Bolsheviks to mythologize Tsiolkovskii as a Soviet hero. But these editorials have been constructed to cause controversy and demythologize histories of Tsiolkovskii written during the Communist era; therefore they have an agenda that supersedes their analysis of his contribution to the history of spaceflight. See G. Salakhutdinov, “Blesk i nishcheta K. E. Tsiolkovskogo,” *Inzhener*, no.11, 1999, 18–21.
4. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 10.
5. See Rom Harre, *Personal Being: A Theory for Individual Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 26–28.
6. See David Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 16–17.
7. See Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).



8. For Foucault's discussion of institutions and their incarceration of the individual, one can of course look at his *Discipline and Punish*. Though his thoughts on his literary and intellectual influences are equally interesting and revealing, see Michel Foucault, "Entretien sur le prison: le livre et sa methode," *Magazine litteraire*, 101 (June 1975): 33. Also see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York, 1973).
9. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!* (Princeton, NJ, 2005).
10. Ibid., 9.
11. See Nikolai Kremenstov, *Stalinist Science* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
12. See John McCannon, "Positive Heroes at the Pole" in *Russian Review* (July 1997).
13. Though from a different methodological framework, one might also refer to Ethan Pollock's work on Stalin as editor and choreographer of scientific paradigms. See Ethan Pollock, *The Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
14. See Natalia Kozlova, "The Diary as Initiation and Rebirth," in Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman, eds. *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 296. Also see Eric Naiman, "On Soviet Subjects and the Scholars Who Make Them," *Russian Review* 60: 3 (2001), 307–59.
15. Peter Wiles, "On Physical Immortality," *Survey* 56/57(1965): 132–134. See also Svetlana Semenova, *Nikolai Fedorov* (Moscow, 1990). According to N. P. Peterson, a Russian historian of philosophy, as early as the 1860s Fedorov had already incorporated the idea of space travel into his bizarre philosophies of resurrection. See "Pis'mo N. Petersona k N. A. Chaevu o N. F. Fedorove," *Russki arkhiv*, no. 5, (Moscow, 1915): 78–81. Also see N. F. Fedorov, *Filosofia obshchego dela* (Moscow, 1913), eds. V. A. Kozhevnikov and N. P. Peterson.
16. For an analysis of the life of Vernadskii see, Kendall E. Bailes, *Science and Russian Culture in an Age of Revolutions, V. I. Vernadsky and His Scientific School, 1863–1945* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990).
17. See Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
18. For a more general understanding of the role of informal science study circles and their adaption and transformation in Soviet Russia, see Daniel A. Alexandrov, "The Politics of Scientific 'Kruzhok': Study Circles in Russian Science and their Transformation in the 1920s." In *Na perelom, sovetskaia biologiya v 20-x-30-x godakh*, edited by E. I. Kolchinskii (St. Petersburg, 1997).
19. "Iz otcheta statnogo smotritel'ia Borovskogo uездnogo uchilishcha za 1889 g. o pabote K. E. Tsiolkovskogo, 20 Dekabria, 1889," *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kaluzhskoi Oblasti* (hereafter cited as GAKO), f. 165, op. 2, d. 1527, ll. 54–55.
20. See K. E. Tsiolkovskii, *Svobodnoe prostranstvo* (Moscow, 1883), found in *K. E. Tsiolkovskii, Izbrannye trudy* (Moscow, 1963), 27–41.
21. *K.E. Tsiolkovskii: Dokumenty i materialy, 1879–1966 gg.* (Kaluga, 1968), 13–14.
22. K. E. Tsiolkovskii, "Issledovanie mirovykh prostranstv reaktivnymi priborami," *Nauchnoe obozrenie*, No. 5, 1903.
23. *Arkhir Rossiiskoi akademii nauk* (hereafter cited as ARAN), fond 555, op. 2, d.14, l.29.

24. *Tsiolkovskii: Dokumenty i materialy, 1879–1966 gg.*, 18–19.
25. *Tsiolkovskii: Dokumenty i materialy, 1879–1966 gg.*, 18.
26. See Joel Shapiro, “A History of the Communist Academy, 1918–1936,” unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1976. For a more contemporary look at new Communist academies and academic institutions in the 1920s, see Michael David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning Among the Bolsheviks, 1918–1929* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).
27. ARAN, fond 555, op.3, d.129, l. 3. Letter dated August 1, 1918. In a series of handwritten diary letters (written after the Bolshevik Revolution), housed in the Russian Academy of Sciences archives, Tsiolkovskii hinted that the Russian scientific community during the Tsarist era in Moscow and St. Petersburg was a closed clique, not easily impressed with a self-taught scientist/inventor from the Russian provinces. In his diary, he bemoaned the fact that “if a more famous person in Imperial Russia, such as Dmitrii Mendeleev, had published these ideas on rocketry, they might have been transferred abroad and translated into French and German much earlier.” See ARAN, fond 555, op.2, d.14, ll. 25–28.
28. ARAN, fond 555, op.3, d.129, ll. 3–4.
29. For an analysis of individual “self-fashioning” in the Soviet period and the writing of autobiographies, see Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!* (Princeton, NJ), 16–18.
30. See Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1959), 254–56. Jochen Hellbeck, however, sees this “self-fashioning” in a different light than Fitzpatrick or Goffman for that matter. Hellbeck derives his notion of subjectivity and identity from Michel Foucault’s work, thus focusing on “shared forms of self-expression and ideals of self-realization.” See Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind* (Cambridge, MA), 8–10.
31. ARAN, fond 555, op.3, d.129, ll. 9–12. There were several correspondences between the Presidium of the new Academy and Tsiolkovskii in the last week of August 1918 regarding the terms of his membership and various stipends they issued him for his research or to pay for him to come work in Moscow for short research stays (*komandirovki*).
32. For an analysis of the popularity of astronomy and cosmonautics in the 1920s and 1930s in Soviet Russia, see James T. Andrews, *Science for the Masses: The Bolshevik State, Public Science, and the Popular Imagination in Soviet Russia, 1917–1934* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2003).
33. See K. Tsiolkovskii, *Atlas dirizhablia iz volnistoi stali* (Kaluga, 1931)
34. See Ia. I. Perel’man, *Mezhplanetnoe putestvie* (1923).
35. See his article K. E. Tsiolkovskii, “Is this mere fantasy,” *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, July 1935.
36. For an analysis of provincial scientific societies and public culture, see James T. Andrews, “Local Science and Public Enlightenment: Iaroslav’ Naturalists and the Soviet State, 1917–31,” in *Provincial Landscapes: The Local Dimensions of Soviet Power, 1917–1953* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 105–125.
37. For an analysis of the political and ideological importance of the construction of “founding father” myths in Stalinist scientific disciplines, see Nikolai Kremmentsov, *Stalinist Science* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
38. For an example of one of his science fiction novels where there are international characters cooperating in outer space, see “Beyond the Earth,” in K. E. Tsiolkovskii, *Put’ k svezdam* (Moskva, 1960).

39. See "Pis'mo K. Tsiolkovskogo I. Stalinu," in *Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (hereafter cited as *APRF*), f. 45, op. 1, ll. 22–22ob. Four days before Tsiolkovskii's death, arrangements were made between local Kaluga Party leaders, such as B. Talia, and Kaganovich to have the huge amount of material sent to Moscow after Tsiolkovskii's death. Eventually the material ended up in the Academy of Sciences archives. The great irony is the Academy and other elite Tsarist institutions had earlier in the century not been as receptive to some of Tsiolkovskii's ideas. See "Zapiska B. Talia L. Kaganovichu," in *APRF*, f. 45, op. 1, l. 19.
40. See speeches by Kiselev and Treivas in "Poslednii put'" in *K.E. Tsiolkovskii: Sbornik, posviashchennyi pamiati znamenitogo deiatelia nauki* (Kaluga, 1935), 93–96. A. S. Kiselev was an old Bolshevik who had been a candidate member of the Communist Party's Central Committee back in Lenin's times and even attended the famous April 1922 Plenum which introduced the post of General Secretary and elected Stalin. See Dmitri Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (New York, NY: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 68–69.
41. "Konstantin Tsiolkovskii," *Pravda*, 20 Sentiabria, 1935, 1.
42. For an analysis of Brooks' approach to state patronage, public culture, and what he terms the "economy of the gift," see Jeffrey P. Brooks, *Thank You Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 83–104. For an analysis of individual and political agency, as the motive and moving force in daily life, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
43. See Amy Nelson, "Cold War Celebrities and Courageous Soviet Canines: The Life and Times of Russian Space Dogs," in *Into the Cosmos: Space Exploration and Soviet Culture*, eds. James T. Andrews and Asif Siddiqi (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, Forthcoming, 2011).
44. See Paul R. Josephson, "Rockets, Reactors, and Soviet Culture," in Loren R. Graham, ed. *Science and the Soviet Social Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 180–85.
45. See Paul Josephson, "Rockets, Reactors," and also see S. Ostrovskii, "Pesenka o sputnike," *Kul'turno-prosvetitel'naia rabota* (1958), 1: 30–33.
46. Loren Graham believes most of these claims were abandoned later in the Brezhnev era in the 1960s and 1970s. See Loren R. Graham, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 142–43.
47. See S. P. Korolyev, "On the Practical Significance of the Scientific and Engineering Propositions of Tsiolkovskii in Rocketry," Lecture given on 17 September 1957, based on the Centennial Celebrations of the Birth of Tsiolkovskii held in Moscow, in *K. E. Tsiolkovskii, Izbrannye trudy* (Moscow, 1963), 16–18.
48. Roald Z. Sagdeev, *The Making of a Soviet Scientist: My Adventures in Nuclear Fusion and Space from Stalin to Star Wars* (New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1994), 4–6.
49. See Valentin Glushko's reminiscences in his grandiose history of the Soviet space program, *The Soviet Encyclopedia of the Cosmos* (Moscow, 1974).
50. Sagdeev himself recognized the duality in Tsiolkovskii's public identity. On the one hand, he believes Tsiolkovskii was co-opted by the regime for its

own purposes. Furthermore, he argues that Stalin used Tsiolkovskii's 1935 broadcast from Red Square to further build the notion of the superiority of Soviet technology. On the other hand, Tsiolkovskii's work became better known in the 1920s and 1930s, and many future space scientists read his popular work voraciously. See Sagdeev, *The Making of a Soviet Scientist* (New York), 3–6, 181–82.

51. See Loren R. Graham, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union*, pp.142–43.

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## CHAPTER 12

### REMINISCENCES

#### SHEILA FITZPATRICK AS AN AUSTRALIAN TEENAGER

*Peter Nicholls*

*Born in 1941, Sheila Fitzpatrick grew up in Melbourne, Australia, at a time when anticommunism was at its zenith. She had a locally famous father, the leftist intellectual and civil liberties activist, Brian Fitzpatrick. Brian Fitzpatrick was a historian and a gifted writer—characteristics later shared by his daughter—with an outsized personality and very little income. Sheila has described being ostracized at school because of his alleged “communism.” A shy, bookish, and musical teenager, she observed her father’s political activities without becoming involved. In 1958, at the age of sixteen, she entered the University of Melbourne with the state’s top overall score on the matriculating exam. After a year of combined honours in English and history, she shifted to history and music for the remainder of her degree program. She received her B.A. with 1st-class honours in 1961. In the following reminiscence, Peter Nicholls describes his impressions of the teenage Sheila and comments on her cultural milieu.*

Sheila Fitzpatrick was my first serious girlfriend. Looking back—and it is a long way to look since all this happened fifty years ago, in 1958—we had so very much in common that it was bound to happen.

To begin with, Melbourne in those days did not have much more than a million people living in it. It was a pleasant, conservative city, which in some respects was like a jigsaw of villages. I do not remember if I had ever met Sheila before 1958, the year she began as an Arts student at the University of Melbourne, but I very possibly had, since we belonged—not geographically, but in the metaphorical sense—to the same village. Her parents, Brian and Dorothy Fitzpatrick, were friends (though not close friends) of my parents, Alan and Shirley Nicholls.

Both Sheila and I were clever, as was attested by both of us being rated top student in English Literature in the State of Victoria in our matriculation (twelfth) year at school and both being permitted to enter Melbourne University while we were still only sixteen years old, rather than the usual

seventeen or eighteen. These days we might have been described as nerds, back then we were swots. However, once I reached university, my cleverness had been severely compromised by everything having previously come too easily, by my spending too much time drinking in pubs, and also by my inability to decide what I wanted to study. I followed first-year Science by second-year Medicine, which I failed, before turning to Arts in 1958. So two years older than Sheila, and in my third year at university, I met her at the beginning of her first year. I was eighteen and she was sixteen.

It seems to me that I can remember the actual occasion of our meeting, a tutorial discussion in English literature of the poem by Gerard Manly Hopkins that begins “Margaret, are you grieving / Over Goldengrove unleaving...”. The autumnal spirit of these verses seemed to appeal to both of us, as adolescents being prone to occasional melancholy. Anyway, the two of us pretty well dominated the class discussion, and so began a friendship which soon blossomed into a love affair.

Actually, Sheila and I, though we had melancholy moments, also had a pronounced sense of fun, and I have photographs of both of us mugging at the camera (a wholly primitive box brownie manufactured by Kodak) and behaving like children. Well, we were kids, poised delicately—and sometimes indelicately—at the cusp between childhood and adulthood. And there were some things to be sad about. We were both asthmatics, for example. We were both rather self-conscious about our appearance (seeing ourselves as homely) and this contributed toward a shyness, which I tried to mask with undergraduate cynicism, and Sheila (more maturely) with an armour of good manners. She had, when necessary, a self-deprecating politeness, which in full flow was almost impossible to penetrate, leading some people to find her standoffish, quite wrongly. Indeed, given half a chance, she was a warm and overtly affectionate person. I never thought of Sheila as plain or homely, though she was certainly short and stocky. Her eyes were sparkling and animated, and she had a charming smile, being more than sufficient to counterpoise a somewhat aristocratic nose. I think she worried about the nose, but I thought it lent her character. We would probably have worried less about ourselves if it were not that our most obvious feature—a confident intelligence—often proved to be a social disability, rather like being gay or having the wrong skin color.

A more serious cause of unhappiness, though its worst effects were intermittent, was the alcoholism of our fathers. Brian Fitzpatrick’s drinking was legendary. My father’s was less public but still corrosive in its effects upon his wife and children. It can readily be seen that Sheila and I had much in common, and it doesn’t stop there. The villages I spoke of that together constitute Melbourne include villages of the mind. The one to which the Fitzpatricks and the Nicholls both belonged was the intellectual left, a somewhat disorderly group within which most people knew each other: it was constituted primarily by academics, journalists, authors, artists, musicians, and latterly television pundits. (There was also, of course, an

intellectual right, and we came to know many of those too.) My father Alan Nicholls was a journalist and occasional television broadcaster, Sheila's father Brian Fitzpatrick had been a notable academic historian, but was perhaps better known for his hugely influential work on the Council for Civil Liberties.

The intellectual left in the 1950s (including distinguished academics like the politics professor McMahon Ball and the history professor Manning Clark) varied in hue from pale pink to deepest red. The Australian author Fiona Capp much later published a book called *Writers Defiled: Security Surveillance of Australian Authors and Intellectuals* (1993), based largely on files—some of them accessible by then—compiled by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), a term considered by some to be an oxymoron. The characters in this book read to me pretty much as a roll call of the adults I'd known (through my parents) since boyhood. This would have been even more true of Sheila, whose father Brian, Capp's book tells us, had a notably thick ASIO file, where my Dad's was rather thin. We are talking of a conservative country in the 1950s, a period in which the idea of banning the Communist Party had much popular support, and in which the Prime Minister was Robert Menzies, a smooth, paternalistic, archetypal Tory (of no mean intelligence) who became a Knight of the Garter and a Warden of the Cinque Ports. Those were the days.

I'm pretty sure Brian was never a communist, though my Dad might have been for a while in the late 1930s. Both, however, found the idea of banning the Communist Party—indeed any political party—a wholly unacceptable abridgment of fundamental rights. In any case, Sheila and I were brought up against a background of somewhat battered and occasionally misinformed idealism, and the sense that wariness of authority figures might be a wise policy. One might have expected that we would both have been brainwashed into uncritical socialism, but we were not, largely because most of these ASIO-pursued demons of the Left were themselves by no means uncritical of socialism. Also, fathers who exaggerate, drink, and are prone to rhetorical flourishes, can easily produce, through the contrariness of teenagers, offspring who are cautious about political and class stereotypes, and a liking for looking hard at the evidence before jumping into whatever politically correct (or incorrect) cause may have been popular that month. So Sheila and I, on many issues, were agnostics. We were in no sense puppets of the Left. Nor of the Right, of course; we did not react against our parents as strongly as that! (This caution, together with a desire to focus on individuals rather than seemingly homogenous political groups, may be part of what made Sheila so revolutionary a force in Russian studies.)

All this is written with hindsight, and may give the impression that we were intolerably serious-minded. In fact we laughed a good deal, and underwent several rites of passage together. I particularly remember one time when Sheila and I, and two of her friends, had the loan of an isolated farmhouse, with no parents or authority figures in sight: the first time I'd ever spent



several days with a girl, unsupervised. It was a golden time. Even though I got hay fever.

One of Sheila's most notable characteristics is her voice. She speaks in a somewhat measured, very precise way, almost eerily unaccented, and I think she always did. It is almost as if she had become extremely fluent in a foreign language, but secretly spoke something much more alien, like Martian. It is one of the things about her that occasionally served to mark her as somehow "different," though I think, more prosaically, that her speech may simply be the result of wanting to get thoughts straight in her head before uttering them. Certainly it was unusual to find so young a person speaking in so adult a way. She was formidable, and the precision of her speech was part of the gestalt. If she had not been two years younger than me, I daresay she would have destroyed my self-confidence. A family legend had it that my parents had been told by a psychology researcher working on intelligence that my IQ was the second highest of all those measured in the State of Victoria. Possessed by a devil of self-destruction I suggested to Sheila that we should both have our IQs measured, in my case for a second time, at the psychology department of Melbourne University. This was easily arranged, and of course Sheila's was higher than mine, something like 149 to 145. I still wince internally when I think of this. Sheila, on learning of this small victory, allowed herself a smile, which almost approached a smirk.

Despite the age difference, I suspect that Sheila had more to teach me than I had to teach her. Music was the main thing. Sheila was a gifted violinist of professional standard whom I supposed back then would go on to become a figure in the musical world. (I had not imagined her becoming a historian, partly because her father's first wife, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, was a very senior academic in the history department of Melbourne University, and this had, I then believed, dampened Sheila's enthusiasm for historical studies.) Through Sheila I not only broadened my musical tastes to include, for example, Bartok, but also got to go to big-name musical events. I remember especially a party given for the celebrated musicians David and Igor Oistrakh, in which Sheila spoke to them in Russian very much better than anything I could muster (we had both studied a little of the language).

Looking back, there are aspects of our relationship I can hardly remember, not so much because it was a long time ago, but because I was insensitive to them at the time. I remember well being fond of Sheila's mother, Dorothy, but I do not remember what I have since learned to have been the case, that the relationship between mother and daughter was very prickly and difficult. Poor Dorothy. It is not easy to have all responsibility thrust upon you because your husband is unreliable and a drinker, and allegedly rather too interested in very young women. It is probably worse if your husband is a popular person of easy charm. I should certainly have been more aware of this at the time, since precisely the same thing (apart from the young women) had happened in my own home. Like Dorothy, my mother Shirley

appeared anxious and put upon much of the time. And also like Dorothy, she was a teacher and often overworked.

Brian's charm and intelligence, not to mention his intimate knowledge of the political and academic worlds, led to some surprising (but very Australian) networking. I remember one afternoon in the Fitzpatrick home when I was working on an essay. Dorothy and Sheila were out, and Brian was asleep after perhaps too self-indulgent a lunch. There was a knock on the door, and nobody but me to answer it. There, to my astonishment, stood Harold Holt, deputy prime minister of Australia, and later to be prime minister after Robert Menzies had completed his massive term of office. "Is Brian in?" the famous man enquired. "Yes, Mr Holt, but, um, he's asleep and I don't like to wake him." "Oh, I understand," said Holt benignly, clearly understanding all too well, "just tell him that Harold called." Though Brian was of the deep Left, and Holt a conservative icon, it seemed they were pals. This was an eye opener, and made the nature of politics seem at once less simple and more interesting than, as an adolescent, I had ever realized. It was a lesson that has stayed with me.

It was not until I researched a big book (*The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, 1979) with a major biographical component, that I fully realized how fallible people's memories are, and how differently things can appear to two observers of the same event. A case in point is Sheila's and my recollections of how our relationship ended. My memory is that we merely drifted apart, she harder working and more focused than I and I more *laissez faire* than she. It probably did not help that one of my preferred hangouts was the notoriously arty and bohemian Swanston Family Hotel in the center of Melbourne, a venue of which Brian Fitzpatrick was also fond. Specifically, I had also fallen in with a theatrical crowd that attracted me more than it did Sheila. We had been together only about a year, and in my memory the ending of the relationship—our friendship did not end—seemed relatively painless. I mentioned this tranquil memory to Sheila a year or so ago, on one of her now annual visits back to Australia, and she said, baldly and slightly crossly, "That's not how it happened; you dumped me." I'm afraid she might be right. I also remember Sheila as enviably serene, but right at the back of my brain, where I can't quite reach it, is the feeling that she could and sometimes did lose her temper, and that she could be quite scathing. In any case, the sanitised memory is the only one I have ready access to, though a slightly grittier Sheila may be closer to the truth.

The Australian generation that both Sheila and I belonged to, those whose university education was in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was well placed to register the early tremors of the social changes that famously began to blossom in the late 1960s, in the United States and the UK, in France and Germany, and even in far-away Australia, where it sometimes felt as if there was a party going on in the next room to which none of us had been invited. This was the time of the diaspora of the Australian intelligentsia, a sufficiently small group for many of us to know one another, but large enough to ensure that even Australia could make

cultural contributions in a big lake, and not just in a small pond. Sheila left Australia, I think, before I did, and never came back to live here. I left in 1968 and returned in 1988. But I have not felt completely Australian since being away; few of us who have returned ever do. Conversely, those of us who stayed away, like Sheila—who has lived and worked in England, Russia and the United States—never seem to lose a kernel of Australian-ness. Even today (in 2008) Sheila has a directness, a fund of common sense, a no-nonsense attitude, a pugnacity when necessary, and a kind of democratic classlessness, all of which I like to think of as Australian. But then again, Sheila is not a woman who can be defined in terms of reductive, sentimental stereotypes. It is probably sentimental of me, therefore, to visualize her as I sometimes do: a short woman with an inward expression who looks as if she can hear things most of us can't hear at all, and playing (To us? To herself?) a very valuable, very old violin so small that surely it was made for a child.

*Fitzpatrick's focus on the Soviet Union dates to her undergraduate years. She took two years of Russian language, and utilized Russian sources for her senior thesis on Soviet musical life. She remained at the University of Melbourne as a tutor in history from 1962–1964, then received a Commonwealth Scholarship to St. Anthony's College, Oxford, for doctoral study in Russian history. Her advisor at Oxford was Max Hayward, and she soon came into contact with other Soviet scholars, notably Leonard Schapiro and E. H. Carr.*

*Fitzpatrick received her Ph.D. in 1969 and interviewed for both a job and a postdoctoral fellowship at the London School of Slavonic and East European Studies. She was awarded the fellowship, delighted, in what she now considers her naive enthusiasm, to be funded only for research. When the fellowship ended, the British academic job market was terrible. An acquaintance from Britain was teaching at University of Texas and suggested her as a last-minute replacement when the person who taught Soviet cultural history and Russian language left. Fitzpatrick says that her decision to stay in the U.S. when that one-year appointment ended was motivated both by personal reasons and by curiosity to see more of America. For the next six years (1974–1980), she lived in New York, first as a research fellow at Columbia University's Russian Institute, then as an associate professor at St. John's College, and finally as an assistant professor on a fixed-term appointment at Columbia.*

*Fitzpatrick's brother, David Fitzpatrick, and friend Barbara Gillam offer contrasting portraits of her during the 1970s. David Fitzpatrick, a professor of Irish history at Trinity College, Dublin, extracts from her letters of the period to depict a witty, verbally gifted, fiercely ambitious and arrogant Sheila (a persona that Fitzpatrick today thinks she assumed specifically for him). Gillam's Sheila is equally intelligent but also gentle, vulnerable, and prone to depression.*

BUT LOUDER SANG THAT GHOST, "WHAT THEN?":  
LETTERS FROM SHEILA FITZPATRICK, 1968–1979

*David Fitzpatrick*

I

In her chosen field of Soviet history, Sheila Fitzpatrick has surely, in the words of W. B. Yeats, "something to perfection brought." It is an awkward assignment for a brother, seven years younger, also an historian but with very different interests, to contribute to an otherwise scholarly *Festschrift*. I cannot judge her work; I certainly shall not judge her character or write an essay in biography. As a seasoned editor of letters, however, I am at least qualified to depict her outlook on the world when young, as expressed in the witty, eloquent, and informative letters that she sent me early in her career. I find I have kept forty-seven of those sent between 1968 and 1979, ranging from one-line postcards to five pages of single-spaced typescript, but mostly aerogrammes packed with tiny but clear characters. There are no errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar, or syntax, no infelicities or wasted words, and (but for their content) the letters could be published without revision. Some are bouncy and confident, others anxious and uncertain. It is disturbing to reopen sheaves of personal correspondence and to trace the gradual but inevitable process of disjunction as the complications of our separate lives eroded the common ground. As in all correspondence, however intimate, many essentials were omitted or half-concealed. Others, though revealed, cannot usefully be made public. What survives this dual process of censorship is not so much a personal diary as a kaleidoscope of impressions of people, places, and situations, punctuated by pithy, sometimes withering, flashes of analysis.

I should explain that my own status as recipient changed radically over the period 1968 to 1979. Until my arrival in autumn 1971 to study at Cambridge, I was the remembered gauche schoolboy of 1964, when Sheila had left Melbourne for St. Antony's College in Oxford. I now assumed the novel and more satisfactory persona of an adult, with wife and topic, and became a friend and confidant during a difficult period in London. After Sheila's departure for America in the following year, letters began to take the place of meetings, though we had various trans-Atlantic reunions and one in Australia, which she visited in 1979 after fifteen years "abroad." For most of the 1970s, when both of us were surviving on short-term contracts in a grim academic environment, we kept fairly close track of each other's experiences and thoughts. This phase ended in about 1979, when I secured a lectureship at Trinity College, Dublin (where I still teach), shortly before Sheila moved from the maelstrom of Columbia to the calmer habitat of Austin, Texas. My concern here is with Sheila's portrayal of those earlier years of discovery, ambition, overwork, ardour, and excitement.

## II

An attractive aspect of these letters is the fresh and incisive responsiveness to people and places. Admittedly, I learned little about San Marino from the first item in the archive (September 3, 1968): "Pseudo-postcard from non-country. ТВОЯ СЕСТРА." But a letter from Upper Galilee, where she was recuperating from life in London, is a model travelogue (July 10, 1971):

If you ignore its military aspects, the kibbutz seems a fair example of state-subsidized agrarian communism. Probably I am a capitalist or rat-racer at heart. However I like picking peaches. On Malkiyya there are too many volunteers and too little work, which is a pity as there is little else to do. The work we have done is weeding cotton fields, picking and packing peaches, picking apples, kitchen, dining-room and laundry duties.... The kibbutzniks are young and married—single life on a kibbutz would be very dull I think.

By the following autumn she had taken up a temporary appointment in Austin, Texas, and was clearly relishing the contradictions of American culture and society (October 3, 1972):

It is true that there is no public transport—I walk to the university, 15 min.—but not true that everyone drives cars, since there is a recent fashion for bicycles and about half the 40,000 U. of Texas students seem to ride them. Also not true that one must eat hamburgers and milkshakes all the time; there are lots of interesting new (to me) fruit and vegetables, even in local Kash-Karry and Minit Mart, and great local enthusiasm for Organic Food, sold for example in the Octopus Garden, run by permanently stoned hippy types. Many UT students (male) have long hair and beards; there is also another (female) type: the Texas Cutie, who is rich and beautiful and frightening.

She went on to parody an emigrant's letter to the folk at home: "So come to America, undoubtedly God's Own Country, even if all the intellectual Americans I know half wish they were living nearer to the sources of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, or at least in Cambridge, Mass."

Within a few months, her sights had extended far beyond Texas and rested on a more cosmopolitan milieu (January 24, 1973):

The radicals I met in New York. They struck me as a most interesting new class of conscience-stricken gentry—stricken about Vietnam, American aggression as cause of the Cold War, oppression of blacks, oppression of women. Of course you can make a career out of conscience as well as anything else, especially in universities (which can be sued for discriminating against blacks and women). But New York is not a place for moderation or realism, since the whole social organization is breaking down. I would like to live there for a while to observe the twilight of civilization. I suppose I have a romantic view of it.

That summer, she persuaded us to inspect God's Own Country, highlights being a prolonged garbage strike in breathless, stifling Manhattan

and a welcome drenching when playful hoods turned a hydrant on the car. There had not been time to discover and enjoy every tourist attraction (September 15, 1973):

I found a walk we should have done across Brooklyn Bridge to Brooklyn Heights, which is a little bit like Georgetown but older and with a lot of creeper and wispy trees like the ones in the entrance to my home. The path across the bridge is in the middle, raised up over the cars; coming back you have the New York skyline (quite clear as soon as the heatwave stopped) seen through metal rigging, which is the way the bridge is made and accompanied by strange moaning sound from the cars. There is a plaque on the bridge commemorating the engineer's wife that says behind every great work is a woman's devotion. I enclose a cutting on subway graffiti.

By now, she had moved from Austin to her first post at Columbia University, which was to remain for so long a source of attraction and frustration in equal measure. At this period, Sheila still delighted in the absurdities and ironies of American political debate, relishing her frequent opportunities to shock well-meaning intellectuals with her idiosyncratic take and mischievous irreverence. Her remarks on Watergate, three months before the president's resignation, had probably been rehearsed at various dinner tables and *têtes-à-têtes* (May 5, 1974):

An enormous burden has been added to each day, which is reading the transcripts of the Nixon tapes in the N Y Times. It takes 2–3 hours. Unfortunately it is compulsive reading, in spite of [characterization deleted] [expletive] [unintelligible]. It would make a fine play. All characters in my opinion very sympathetic, but Haldeman is my favourite. When you have people trying out various scenarios, some knowing they are being taped, all careful not to dwell on actual facts but reporting other people's reports of what was reported to them, the complexities are staggering & no wonder no-one speaks English. Nixon is a kind of chimpanzee Macbeth. I don't know why everyone is so taken with the morality angle. The interesting thing is not morality but modes of explanation—search for a narrative form to convey essential truth.

Much the same analysis might be applied to any *élite* living in fear of dis-possession, whether Stalin's communists or America's Sovietologists. In lighter vein, Sheila sent a picturesque account of a holiday in the West Indies (September 3, 1978):

By the way, I strongly recommend Jamaica as a place for a holiday (even though I wanted to go to seedy Haiti at first)...Americans do not like to go to Jamaica because the natives are said to be unfriendly. However they are more indifferent than unfriendly—sometimes they make anti-imperialist gestures if you do not pick them up on the roads—and that is much better than having obsequious natives. Of course there are a lot of people sitting round doing nothing or chewing pieces of sugarcane. Outside Kingston, it

seems that there are two kinds of jobs worth having—tourist-connected and bauxite industry. If you do not have one of these jobs, you had better go and live in West Kingston or one of the shanty towns outside, because the farms are too small even to need family labour, the father hangs on until he dies, and then the eldest son gets everything. Jamaica apparently grows very good marijuana, called Ganja; and anyone can cut down a banana, coconut, breadfruit etc. with the machete that they all carry for this eventuality (or to cut up bodies of lovers and relatives, according to the incredibly awful Daily Gleaner).

A machete might have proved a useful accessory during her own struggles for employment and security in those early years.

### III

Sheila's letters are naturally packed with observations about academic politics (characterizations deleted!) and performance (research, conference papers, books). She must share responsibility for my choice of Irish history as a life-long preoccupation, having dispatched the following sage advice when I was contemplating postgraduate research (November 9, 1970):

Please do not change your topic to the British Depression or the Comintern, or for that matter Soviet literary politics or almost anything to do with the history of ideas, because there are so many people doing these subjects already. I think you are better off in Irish history.

By comparison with Ireland, endlessly fascinating to me but (until recently) a backwater for the world at large, the Soviet field seemed vast and perennially topical. Bright ideas were not merely uttered, but aroused public interest beyond academe. Just after securing a temporary post at St. John's University in Queens, Sheila was bound for Princeton to discuss Solzhenitsyn (October 22, 1974):

I am going there in a few days to give my famous talk on Gulag Archipelago as the Catch 22 of recent Sov. Lit. I gave it at Columbia already, having spent fully 2 hours preparing including reading book. My discovery was that almost everyone laughs when they are reading it & almost everyone suppresses that fact. You should read it; it actually is quite funny. E—from Yale said he had heard I gave a structural analysis of Gulag from his mother (rather remarkable widow of Bundist leader whom Russians shot c. 1941). That pleased me for some reason.

Never deformed by false modesty, her letters exude justifiable satisfaction with her own cleverness and intellectual power (as well as fascination with the exercise of power, past and present). Two years after publication of *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, she sent me a gleeful message from

Austin (April 7, 1973):

Did I tell you my book was being translated into Italian? The point of that piece of information is: how good do you have to be to get a job like everyone else? “Hey man, that’s really something,” V—said in his Serbian all-American accent when I told him.

Brilliance was also expected, even demanded from close friends, such as her second husband Jerry Hough, an unconventional political scientist at Duke University (June 10, 1975):

I am just back from my Californian trip—Jerry & I drove to Stanford for conference on Russian women & back via NW. On the way out, since I had not written a paper for various reasons inc. disagreements on topic with the organizers, we did an interesting experiment. I thought I didn’t know enough about women in the 20s to write a general paper; Jerry thought I did. So he cross-examined me on the subject & took notes while I drove, then typed a 17 page paper (still in the car) from the notes. No footnotes, but otherwise a quite normal & respectable academic paper which I read at the conference. I was most impressed. Also it amused me to thumb my nose at the women’s lib people at the conference, even when they didn’t know I was doing it.

Two such powerhouses, working as a team, could scarcely fail to prevail. Four years later, they shared an “extraordinarily successful” research trip to Moscow, which provided essential documentation for Sheila’s reinterpretation of the Purges and life under Stalin. She revelled in these archival coups (January 10, 1979):

- 1) Three months’ work in archives of industry and trade unions, previously seen by nobody from the west nor dreamt of. 2) In one of the Academy of Sciences libraries, materials that the archives still regard as totally closed—stenograms of Party Control Commission & Council of Labor and Defence; in one case GPU material circulated among delegates at a Party congress, extremely enlightening. 3) Telephone directories of 1935, 1937 and 1939, plus the in-house directory of the Commissariat of Heavy Industry. Also, city directories of Moscow & other places giving profession & current job for an odd group—public office holders plus telephone subscribers. At first, I sometimes told the other Americans working in Moscow what I had found, but they began to look at me oddly. Some say I got the archives because my father is a big man in the Australian Communist Party. There are many rumours of that kind about me: one student in effect asked me to intercede in his behalf with KGB. That is why I have become so calm lately. (For benefit of any uninformed reader, my father was not in Aust CP & I have no connection with KGB.)



Though facetious, the message to an imaginary censor dramatized the fact that Sovietology was not merely an academic discipline, but a battlefield of the cold war in which the distinction between scholar and spook was often hazy.

#### IV

Academic ambition, qualified by persistent self-doubt and growing awareness of the price of success, is a pervasive theme of these letters. After her first semester at Austin, she reflected on the interaction between academic and public politics (January 24, 1973):

I think also that there is a kind of fashionable detente in the air from which I profit: at any rate they all talk about my archives and Soviet experience when they praise me. Still, nobody has come up with a good job offer yet, so it can't be too serious. The trouble with detente, of course, is that it has cut money for Soviet studies; and quite good people with jobs are losing them because they can't get tenure and can't stay without it (union rules).

Before long, she had decided to take on America rather than retreating to less challenging outposts such as Britain or Australia (April 1973):

In spite of possible or probable visa complications after 2 years I have decided to try my luck in America, and Columbia is the best jumping-off point. I think I have been seduced by the glamorous aspects of New York and Washington life. Also there are a lot of people I like in the American Soviet field.

Far from flinching at the machinations behind university appointments and alignments, she already relished their complexities (November 20, 1973):

It is a pity one has to spend so much time talking about jobs and tactics and tenure. . . . But as a matter of fact I also get some enjoyment from the wheeling and dealing—tempered by the fact that I am the commodity being dealt in.

Yet her desire to master the rules of the game, and play a winning hand, was initially moderated by the romantic belief that virtue (if attractively packaged) might bring success without the need for ruthless manipulation. The tension between these two approaches intensified during her first year at Columbia (April 10, 1974):

K—has really become a devil's advocate about me: every day he reminds me it is not enough to be liked (that he does admit, but attributes it to my awful ingratiating character or to the weakness of middle-aged men, according to mood). I think his idea is that the historians are fond of me & think my work

is good but doubt that I know enough outside it; . . . It is a problem being interdisciplinary—one day I am convinced that I ought to know more history, the next day more political theory, or philosophy, or literary theory, or German, or Polish, or statistics . . . But I can do my work without knowing those things, that's the trouble.

Two years later, the academic game was beginning to pall (April 21, 1976):

I have rather mixed feelings about Columbia at the moment. . . . There is an unpleasant competitive feeling about the situation in general; and of course in a time of recession there is even competition for graduate students and class enrolments. I don't have the sense of doing badly in the competition, but of being regarded warily as a potential threat by a rather large number of people.

She began to falter as evidence multiplied of conspiracy and betrayal (June 18, 1976): "I have just about lost my tolerance of American academic politics, and am now inclined to weep bitterly and do nothing when anything goes wrong." Yet the longer one stayed in the "rat-race," the greater the personal investment and the higher the stakes became. Self-doubt lingered, but the determination to conquer her field eventually prevailed over the niggling anxiety expressed by Yeats in "What Then?" (May 4, 1977):

In some ways I would like to drop out or run away to Siberia or California. Unfortunately I am too old to do that [she was thirty-five], so I will stay here. In which case I might as well continue clawing my way up to be the Foremost Soviet Historian of My Generation. The trouble is that this now seems to me not enormously difficult, if I can sit still for 10 years & write the political & social histories that I know I can write. But what then?

## V

This brief and fastidiously censored epitome of Sheila's letters to her brother suggests some of the fields in which she might have excelled, if Sovietology had not claimed her soul. More than most scholars, she has shown the disposition and insight to make a mark as a writer and social commentator. Her fascination with words, and skill in deploying them, has in recent years produced some striking experiments in autobiography and nonacademic writing. Perhaps others will follow. Music, one of our shared interests only occasionally mentioned in these letters, has again become an essential part of her life. Now that she has probably achieved recognition as "the Foremost Soviet Historian" of a generation entering retirement, there may be opportunities for relaxation and more versatile use of her talents. She can hardly be expected to recover the sheer *joie de vivre* of those early letters. Yet, so long as her extraordinary will power abides, we should expect to be surprised.

## SHEILA FITZPATRICK IN NEW YORK CITY

*Barbara Gillam*

We met, I think, through South East Asianists Bill and Margaret Roff early in the 1970s in a much shabbier, more threatening New York City than the cool place it has become. This difference is reflected in our old neighborhood around Columbia where Choc Full O' Nuts, Takeome foods, and the Ideal Restaurant (with its wonderful guava milkshakes) have given way to fancy delis and expensive coffee shops. Reverberations from the intensely emotional student revolution of '68, which lingered strongly in our time, have long since gone. We took our chances of being mugged then and rather prided ourselves on our ability to survive. Now in a much less dangerous time, Columbia pays guards sitting in little booths to protect its affluent students. It was a neighborhood where intellectuals such as Lionel and Diana Trilling and Fritz Stern held court in their apartments on Riverside Drive or Claremont Avenue while in the less salubrious streets around Amsterdam Avenue roamed Kerensky and other shadowy remnants of extraordinary, often eastern European, lives.

I lived with my then husband Bo Lawergren in a Columbia building on the Amsterdam Avenue side in the next apartment to an old Columbia English professor who had been the discoverer of the manuscript of "Gone with the Wind" in his youth and in old age carried a carving fork inside his jacket with which to stab muggers. Also in the building I met Glenda Adams, the keenly observant Australian short story writer, who taught creative writing at Columbia. She became my close friend and also a friend of Sheila, who may or may not appear in Glenda's first novel *Games of the Strong*. Glenda returned to Australia in 1989 after 23 years in her beloved New York. I had returned a few years earlier and Sheila began to stay with me on her trips to Australia. People who can view one's life as a whole become more significant with increasing age and it is one of the few compensations of aging to see what kind of older person one's youthful friends become.

Sheila and I have always got on despite the fact that she is an historian and I am an experimental psychologist. Apart from our Australian backgrounds (which were actually not very similar) we share a strong skepticism about received wisdom, a passion for evidence, and a certain delight in human folly about which we always seem to agree. We thought of ourselves as New Yorkers, not expatriates, and spent many hours in intense discussion of current American issues such as New York feminism. We also liked to sing around the piano (with me singing and Sheila at the piano) belting out old favourites such as "Ich grolle nicht" "Abide with me," and "Drink to me only with thine eyes."

When I first knew Sheila she was not yet, of course, the highly successful, much admired figure she has become, although the exceptionality of

her work was beginning to be appreciated. She was in a nontenure track position in the complex organizational and political environment of the Russian Institute at Columbia. Her analyses of the political maneuverings and motivations of her colleagues were fascinating and reminded me of why she was so good at Russia. At other times though, when my anticonspiracy theory tendencies were uppermost, I thought that surely whatever might be the case in the Soviet Union, Columbia professors could not possibly be so deviously interesting. But she was in a difficult situation—forced to try and position herself in a male environment where an extra sexual dimension was added to the difficulties men face at that age and stage of their careers. She seemed personally and professionally vulnerable and some of her relationships seemed only to add to her anxiety and depression. All the more remarkable that in this problematic academic environment she was pursuing her novel approach to the Stalin period, exploring somewhat taboo issues in a cool empirical manner that was like a red rag to those who insisted on a morally driven approach to history. I was very sympathetic to her position and would like to think that it was a comfort for her to have someone entirely outside the field to talk to about her difficulties.

I doubt though that Sheila really needed to be propped up intellectually. It is also deeply in her nature to question orthodoxies and I think she took considerable pleasure in not being part of the crowd. I still remember her, one day when she had just been at a seminar at Columbia, telling me with some relish how she had shocked the group by pointing out the humor in Solzhenitsyn's polemical writing.

Sheila was steadfast but not aggressive in the face of disapproval. She has a gentle manner, which I think has made a number of people want to protect her. Her vulnerability made her receptive to these protectors while never causing her to deviate from her intellectual path.

*From 1975 to 1984, Fitzpatrick was married to Jerry Hough, a political scientist and fellow Sovietologist, now the James B. Duke Professor of Political Science at Duke University. This was her second marriage; a previous marriage (1966–1973) to Alex Bruce, a fellow student of history at the University of Melbourne who became a Japanologist, had effectively ended before she left England. Fitzpatrick and Hough eventually also separated amicably. In 1980, Fitzpatrick received an offer from the University of Texas. Her appointment at Columbia had a fixed-term, without possibility of tenure. When the history department nonetheless tried to put her up for tenure, the dean refused on the grounds that the position had never been approved as a tenure-track appointment. Fitzpatrick accepted the offer from Texas, and moved there as a full professor. Hough, like Fitzpatrick, was a "revisionist" interested in the social bases of Soviet power. He offers his perspective on the mutual intellectual influence they had on each other during the 1970s and 1980s, as well as on the intellectual climate of the field at that time.*

## REMINISCENCES

*Jerry F. Hough*

Sheila Fitzpatrick has been the great Establishment historian on the Soviet Union of her generation, but she would have found this unthinkable when she was young. Other contributors are better able to write about her Establishment years. I was married to her for approximately 10 years from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s when both of us were in the formative years of our academic careers, and have, I think, a unique perspective.

When Sheila was young, she had a rare combination of insecurity, determination, and persistence. Her father, Brian Fitzpatrick, was a leading left-wing historian in Australia—really an Australian Irishman who thought England had an exploitative policy toward Australia, and, no doubt, even more toward Ireland. He was not a Communist, but a leader of the civil liberties group that was fighting Australian McCarthyism. As such, he was wrongly accused of being a Communist and could not get an academic job.

Brian's children felt the sting of these attacks, and Sheila's wounds from this experience never have quite disappeared. Her interest in the Soviet purge was never limited to the usual questions about its causes and political consequences. She also was fascinated with trying to understand the reasons why average people would denounce others. The roots of that interest lay in her own past.

Sheila was a typical top Australian student when going to graduate school at Oxford. Once there, she did not remain in the libraries, but was one of the first to go on the British exchange to study the Soviet period. The topic of her dissertation was Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Commissar of Enlightenment. Most young scholars writing about Lunacharsky would have done a traditional study of Soviet educational and cultural policy in the 1920s. Instead, Sheila focused on the conflict between Lunacharsky, who really *was* interested in enlightenment, and those in the industrial sphere whose concern was promoting the technical education on which industrialization rested. Since this meant studying the relationship between relatively liberal Bolshevik intellectuals and people of working class and peasant origins who worked in the apparatus, her real topic was the character of Bolshevism and the Bolshevik Revolution.

In those days, no foreign scholars were admitted into the archives of the Soviet period, and the purges of the 1930s meant that few politically significant people from the 1920s had survived to be interviewed. As a result, nearly all the top graduate students working on Russian history chose topics in the Tsarist period on which archival access was possible. Sheila managed to break through both barriers to a sophisticated study of the 1920s.

First, she discovered that Lunacharsky's daughter was still living in Moscow, and through her she met one of the most fascinating middle-level figures in Soviet history, Igor A. Sats. Sats at that time was on the editorial board of *Novyi Mir*, the literary journal that was on the cutting edge in opening taboo subjects of discussion in the Khrushchev period. More important for Sheila's work, he had been Lunacharsky's brother-in-law and personal secretary for a decade in the 1920s. Sats had a broad interest in the political battles of the 1920s and loved to talk about them. Sheila visited him repeatedly over a long period and encouraged him to reminisce about the 1920s.

Second, Sheila also managed to break the barrier on access to archives of the Soviet period. She repeatedly put in requests, only to be denied. She appealed up the chain of command, finally reaching the deputy director of Soviet archives. Once more she pleaded the case that archives were absolutely vital to her work. She broke into tears. The deputy director was touched on a personal level and said "Adults don't cry. It is okay." He gave her access. Clearly he saw no danger from this "little girl."

I met Sheila when she was an assistant professor at Columbia University. We were together during a decade in which she was moving from a study of the 1920s into the study of the late 1920s and first half of the 1930s. Many things drew us together intellectually. Neither of us came out of the battles about Marx. We were in no way Marxists or defenders of Marx, let alone of Soviet socialism, but we also had no emotional commitment either to virulent anti-Marxism or to the "rescue" of Marx and other socialist movements from Stalinism. Marx simply was not our issue in the way that he was for many in the field. We were trying to understand the social base of a regime we both found repulsive, and we found a lot to talk about.

Sheila's work had led her to the conclusion that workers and peasants had not supported the Bolsheviks for the same reasons as Lunacharsky. She saw Lunacharsky and other liberals as outsiders and his opponents resting for their support on the dominant forces of the revolution. We both believed that both the revolution and Stalinism rested on real social forces and that these forces were anti-liberal, anti-intellectual, and anti-Western.

For both of us, the intellectually most fruitful—and surprising—discovery was that we had been studying the same people. In writing my dissertation and first book, I had learned an enormous amount about "the Class of 1937," those who were promoted into the empty slots that the purge created. They were the Brezhnev generation who had been born between 1900 and 1910. Sheila had a superb understanding of this generation when they were in their twenties and were being recruited into the party and into college as young adults to receive the diluted technical education that the enemies of Lunacharsky had wanted. She had never fully appreciated, however, how much these "*vydvizhentsy*" ("the promoted ones") were the main beneficiaries of the purge.

Thus, our interest in a particular generation unexpectedly coincided, and in ways that were extremely valuable to both of us. Sheila had an indirect impact on my position in the policy debates about the post-Brezhnev

transition that would never be known simply by examining her own books and articles. For example, my first Brookings book, *Soviet Leadership in Transition*, was published in 1980 and was heavily influenced by insights that I *was* receiving from her. Indeed, the extremely detailed research on which the book was based was done in the fall of 1979 while we were in Moscow on the Academy of Sciences exchange together.

Sheila also had an impact upon my daughter that no one would ever suspect. Sheila had no children of her own, but my daughter, Susan Hough, lived with us while she was in high school. Sheila was, in reality, raising her, including for over three months in Moscow in 1979 when we were on the Academy of Sciences exchange and Sheila was doing work in the archives of the Commissariat of Industry of the First Five Year Plan.

Susan is a seismologist who has done a great deal of technical work and who, like Sheila, has edited the major journal in her field. Sheila, first of all, was a role model of what a woman could be. Yet, Susan also has studied many historical earthquakes, and she has written five books that are less technical. One is a biography of Charles Richter, based on his personal archives. Other articles and books draw information from a variety of archives. Sheila casts long and unexpected shadows.

But if Sheila influenced me and my daughter, I also had several indirect impacts on her life and work, some perhaps useful and others quite unfortunate. One was the result of her realization that her *vydvizhentsy* were the main beneficiaries of the purge. As Sheila shifted her research and writing to the First Five Year Plan and the early Stalin period, Stalin's policy perspectives became much more central to her work. The fact that the post-Purge generation overwhelmingly came from a very narrow group of those born from 1900 to 1910, many of them participants in the upward mobility programs, raised profound new questions about Stalin's intentions in the 1920s.

Sheila decided to look very closely at Stalin's statements and actions about the *vydvizhentsy* during the 1920s and 1930s. To her surprise, she discovered that Stalin had made a number of such statements and had always emphasized the crucial importance of having an administrative and political elite with the characteristics of the *vydvizhentsy*. Sheila wrote a paper that presented Stalin's position on the subject and published it as "Stalin and the Making of the New Elite."

The basic problem was that the mere raising of the question about Stalin and the new elite dramatized the underlying issue about Bolshevism with which Sheila had begun her research on Lunacharsky. Was the essence of Bolshevism represented by the prerevolutionary political exiles who perished in the great show trials or by the Brezhnev generation and its parents?

A connected issue was the relationship of Lenin and Stalin. No one thought that Lenin would have had anything like the Great Purge, but many believed that the forced collectivization and more authoritarian regime of the First Five Year Plan was implicit in his assumptions. Others saw the New Economic Plan of the 1920s not as a temporary retreat, but a reflection of

Lenin's long-range vision of socialism, or, at least, a vision he came to adopt after the civil war.

From this latter "revisionist" perspective, Stalinism (and not just the purge) represented the repudiation both of Lenin and the social support on which the revolution rested. Everyone knew that the new bureaucrats or *apparatchiki* were a key part of Stalin's political base, but the largely unexplored question was whether there was a difference between the new bureaucrats and the workers and semiworkers of 1917 to 1921.

The question was whether the Brezhnev generation represented the essence of the revolution, but without the fervor of their youth. By raising the questions of "Stalin and the Making of a New Elite," Sheila was implying that the workers and semiworkers of the revolution were a core element of support for the Stalin period. She implicitly made the same point when she took the unusual decision to date the revolution from 1917 to 1932 in her classic book, *The Russian Revolution*, and thereby to treat the early 1930s as a culmination of the revolution, not its repudiation.

Younger scholars have no idea about the importance of such issues in the politicized scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s. For Richard Pipes, the issue was whether scholarship would concentrate on a moralistic attack on the Soviet system. For others, the issue was supporting dissidents trying to overthrow the system. Those trying to liberalize the Soviet Union had to write "between the lines" of the censorship and felt that their best strategy was to claim that they were the true Leninists. They sought out and cited any statements by Lenin that seemed to imply liberalism and reform, while their opponents cited any Lenin statements that seemed to imply the opposite.

Western scholars were quite aware of this fact. I remember most distinctly a panel discussion at an AAASS national scholarly convention in which a quite prominent scholar criticized a negative interpretation of Lenin as illegitimate because it undercut the work of Soviet dissidents. He said that dissidents were harmed by an anti-Lenin position taken by Western scholars such as Sheila. Western scholars, it was argued, should take this consideration into account when they published.

Sheila hence found her work controversial with some because she tried to understand the Soviet system objectively and with others because she had the "wrong" view of the revolution. Unfortunately, her marriage with me drew her into further controversies for which she had no responsibility at all. My work on the relationship of social change and future political evolution had only begun to be published a few years before I met Sheila, and, as a result, some naturally, if incorrectly, linked my new work and my marriage. Many had the thought that the editor of *The New Republic* published in his magazine: Hough was a good solid student of Merle Fainsod who had been corrupted by this Marxist foreigner who had favorable views even of Stalin. It was ludicrous. Sheila never was a Marxist, and she had highly negative views about the revolution—indeed, all revolutions—and toward Lenin as well as Stalin.



Similarly, when Sheila went to the Russian Research Center to give her first talk on her historical work, the first questioner asked her to defend her awful views on political participation. This too was ludicrous. She had no views on political participation, correct or incorrect, was not interested in the subject, and had said nothing about it in her talk. I was writing about the subject at the time, and others were merging me with her in their minds. The experiences of Sheila and her father in her youth meant that this particular type of criticism touched especially sensitive nerves.

A broader feature of cold war scholarship intensified this misunderstanding of Sheila's work, namely the weakness of historiography: the absence of a formal recognition of different "schools of thought" and the failure to structure work as tests of hypothesis of competing interpretations. The most important difficulties came from the ubiquitous use of the word "revisionism" and the failure to define it. Sheila was a "revisionist," and Stephen Cohen was a "revisionist," but they were revisionists on different questions.

Sheila's central revisionism involved her sense that the social forces making the mass migration from the country to the city continued to have the values of 1917 of which she disapproved. Sheila never doubted that the purge was a deliberate policy of Stalin, but she certainly thought that many of those "below" relished actions that Stalin took. Solzhenitsyn reported that many peasants in the camp believed that God works in strange ways and that the Great Purge of administrators was just punishment for officials who had conducted collectivization and put peasants in camps.

As Sheila looked at the process of denunciation in the purge, she often found a nastiness that made it hard for her to think of the *narod* as a wholly benevolent force. But, of course, Sheila never would make the mistake of thinking that there is something particularly malevolent in Russian national character. She did not think that the Australian *narod* was benevolent in the 1940s and early 1950s either.

*Fitzpatrick first went to Russia as a British Council Exchange Scholar in 1966–67, returning twice in the next few years. After her move to the United States, those trips ceased. Without a U.S. passport, she was not eligible for American exchanges, but without a post at a British university, she could no longer go on the British exchange. Her travels to Russia started up again in the late 1970s and continued at very frequent intervals through the early 2000s, after which they tailed off. In the 1980s, she had developed a number of professional friendships with Russian historians, several of whom she invited to Texas and Chicago for extended visits. Efim Iosifovich Pivovarov and Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kozlov describe their acquaintance with Fitzpatrick and their encounters with Fitzpatrick's work.*

## REMINISCENCES

*Efim Iosifovich Pivovarov*

I first met Sheila Fitzpatrick at one of many nice evenings spent in the hospitable kitchen of my unforgettable teacher, Professor Vladimir Zinovievich Drobizhev, a person whose memory I will always cherish. It was a long time ago, as we like to joke today, in the late seventies of *last century*. My teacher has not been with us in life for nineteen years. From our very first meeting, I recall their dialogue at V. Z. Drobizhev's apartment on Tverskaia Street. It was a dialogue of two professionals and historians who were excellently informed about our country's archival repositories for the 1930s, regional as well as central archives. Fate linked us again when precisely V. Z. Drobizhev proposed that I prepare an extended review of Sheila Fitzpatrick's next book.

This occurred in a totally different epoch from today, in a different world and even world order. I was then about thirty years old, and this was, in practice, my first attempt to give a detailed analysis of the work of a researcher who was already well known in our country and, naturally, in the United States. Vladimir Zinovievich calculated on "killing two birds with one stone" when he proposed that I write the review. He knew, of course, that as editor of the "Soviet History Abroad" section of the journal *Istoriia SSSR*, I would do everything in my power to insure that the review would be published, and that, considering the circumstances of the day, it would at the very least not be read as a frontal attack by the author of the monograph. At the same time, I knew perfectly well how highly my teacher regarded Sheila's scholarship. All of us, of course to different degrees, took various outside circumstances into consideration; we understood under what conditions this review was published. I still do not know how well I justified V. Z. Drobizhev's hopes, nor do I know how the author of the monograph itself truly reacted to my text. But the main thing was that it did not affect our friendship. I still recall that I tried as best I could, and the task turned out not to be an easy one for me. After the review had been published, one of our famous historians, Professor Valerii Ivanovich Bovykin, unexpectedly (for us) turned his attention to it. He praised me and, since he was already a professor at Moscow State University at the time I studied there in the history department, I was not only glad, I was also excessively candid. I was undeniably flattered by his evaluation, and I remarked that it was not easy for me to do it and it was much more, I said, rewarding to write something myself. To that, Valerii Ivanovich with his own particular sense of humor remarked, "Real work is always thankless..."

In 1989, Sheila Fitzpatrick invited V. Z. Drobizhev to visit her at the University of Texas, Austin, or to send one of his colleagues in the department to teach. V. Z. Drobizhev's choice fell on me, and for the first time, I had the opportunity to participate in Sheila Fitzpatrick's seminars, to present papers

before her graduate students, to take part with her in colloquia and conferences, including in the national conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) that took place in Chicago that year. The month during which we worked together played an invaluable role in my professional growth and in my further contacts with a whole range of American specialists in twentieth-century Russian history.

With enormous gratitude, I remember how Sheila Fitzpatrick arranged my work in Texas. Like the real leader of her graduate student group, she literally split up the concerns of the visiting professor from Moscow between her students. Not a week went by in which I did not visit some university center in Texas. I spoke and visited with colleagues in a whole range of universities in Dallas, Houston, College Station and others, and I visited such historical places as San Antonio, and so forth. My very first day in Austin particularly comes to mind. Sheila asked her young relative [probably Jerry Hough's son, Bobby Hough –ed.] to show me the city. The young man was very good and responsibly set himself to the task. He decided to arrange an excursion around the city for me on his motorcycle. So I found myself for the first time in my life a passenger on a wonderful Suzuki, but since I had never before experienced anything similar, after the first twenty minutes or so of furious riding, in a helmet, I stopped asking him any questions at all as we drove, hoping for a successful end to the enterprise. How amazed and overjoyed I was when, at the end of our expedition, he drove up to an automobile, and I understood that he had done all of this just in order to provide me particular enjoyment. He undeniably succeeded, for I remember this event to this day.

In the next several years, I regularly traveled to the United States to deliver lecture courses on Russian history, and I taught at the country's leading centers: the University of Chicago (where Sheila Fitzpatrick again invited me); the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and the University of Michigan. Besides that I was invited to present lectures at the University of California, Riverside; Harvard University; Princeton University; the University of Iowa, and others. But all of this began with my participation in Sheila Fitzpatrick's seminars, and because of that, it is with immense gratitude that I remember our joint work together, which had such long-lasting consequences.

As a matter of fact, our friendship and the friendship of our families also began then and continues today. When they came to Moscow, Sheila and Misha always visited my wife and me at our home. My sons recall from childhood a curious incident, which has become part of our family lore. Just before Sheila Fitzpatrick and Misha Danos's first visit to our home, I came home from work and told the children that Sheila and her husband would be coming to visit. This news brought forth from both of my boys a simple explosion of laughter, the cause of which I only found out many years later. The thing is that in Russian, "Sheila" sounds similar to the word *shilo* (awl). To Russian boys, this is an extremely familiar term, which has both a fully concrete and even a practical meaning. But the combination of words *Shilo* s

*muzhem* (awl with a husband) summoned for them such a wave of contradictory emotions that they preserve it as a childhood memory to this day. Our children also relate to Sheila Fitzpatrick extremely affectionately. They have both visited her in the United States and, of course, they participate in all of our gatherings in Moscow.

I also recollect Sheila Fitzpatrick's and Misha Danos's affectionate relationship and their concern for one another. He represented the completely other world of physics, but he treated everything that formed and continues to form the meaning of Sheila Fitzpatrick's scholarly life very respectfully, with particular love. Gradually, step by step, Misha also became a part of our community of historians. He brought to that community his own extremely rich historical experience of both the Soviet epoch and the life of the Russian emigre community. It was very pleasant to observe this happy pair in the most varied circumstances, and to this day I preserve the warmest memories of my relationship with Misha Danos.

Decades have already passed from the time that our scholarly ties and friendship began, but many, many times I have been a witness to the fact that our joint endeavor to strengthen the scholarly ties of young historians of both countries bears fruit. Many of Sheila Fitzpatrick's students, whose first steps in the field of research on twentieth-century Russian history I once observed, have already become professors, recognized specialists in their fields. Now they bring their own groups of young American researchers to our Russian State University for the Humanities. This once more attests to Sheila Fitzpatrick's enormous contribution to the study and instruction of Russian history for a new generation of American historians and Russianists.

## SHEILA FITZPATRICK: RUSSIAN CONTEXT

### *Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kozlov*

"It's time, my friend, it's time..." The time of reminiscences has arrived. The friends and students of Sheila Fitzpatrick, with whom I have been personally acquainted for over twenty years, invited me to take part in this book. To agree proved easier than to write it. A story about an American professor of history kept turning into a reminiscence about myself—a Russian historian, whose "Soviet" and "Russian" life ran parallel to the "American" life of Sheila Fitzpatrick, intersecting only at a few key "turning points." In the end, I made peace with the situation. If you carry within yourself the imprint of other people, then a story about those people inevitably becomes your own autobiography...

When Sheila Fitzpatrick published her first book on the history of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (1970) and delivered lectures on Soviet history at Birmingham University (1971–72), I and my fellow students in the historical sources division of the history department at Moscow

State University did not consider the Soviet period history at all. Anyone who wrote a thesis on that period we suspected of careerism. At that time it didn't even enter my mind that someday I would study Soviet history, much less the history of Soviet culture. I read documents of the Moscow Chamber of the Treasury with pleasure, wrote a thesis on the history of taxation in prerevolutionary Russia, and hoped that I would dedicate my professional life to similar themes from the "real" (prerevolutionary) historical past, untainted by contemporary concerns. But in 1972, I received my post-university job assignment at the Academy of Sciences Institute of History of the USSR. And there I unexpectedly learned that the position in the sector that studied "my" subjects was already occupied, seemingly through string-pulling. There was, however, a vacancy in the sector devoted to the history of Soviet culture. There was no other space for me at the prestigious academic institute at that time, but the director was obligated to take on a "young specialist" through the mandatory job assignments program. In this way, Soviet "social practice" redirected my "life course" and pushed it toward the collisions to which Sheila Fitzpatrick subsequently (even if on the basis of earlier material) dedicated her best books.

Thus (accidentally?!) my life was linked to Soviet history for many years. In the normal world, a novice like myself, beginning a career in the history of Soviet culture, would probably have long been acquainted with Sheila's book on the history of Narkompros in 1917–1921. I had not even heard of it, although Narkompros was precisely the object of study of several of my new colleagues. The "classic" historiographical works on Soviet culture were at that time considered to be M. P. Kim's 1957 book *Forty Years of Soviet Culture* and I. S. Smirnov's 1960 study, *Lenin and Soviet Culture: Lenin's Governmental Activity in the Sphere of Cultural Construction (October 1917–Summer 1918)*. These were talented and smart people. But that, as one might easily guess, was hardly reflected at all in the works that emerged from their pen. The stuff that I read on Soviet culture at that time, overcoming my boredom, did not excite me at all. Rather, it perplexed me. Surely I wasn't doomed to study *this* field for the rest of my life. My historiographical enthusiasm was saved by old newspapers from the mid-1930s, which I read day by day in the newspaper reading room of the RSFSR State Public Historical Library during the first few years of my work (the scholars in my sector were compiling a chronicle of cultural life in the USSR), and also the collection of sociology, psychology, pedagogy, and criminology journals from the 1920s, likewise held at the "*Istorichka*."

In the end, this engaging reading pushed me toward the study of the social history of the 1920s. Surely at that point I should have become acquainted with Sheila Fitzpatrick, who was studying the same period and a closely related topic—she was working on her book on the system of education and social mobility in the USSR (1921–1932). But the absurd "cold world" of those years, torn up into pieces and hostile toward itself, in which we both were born and grew up, did not allow me to do so. In the mid-1970s I started writing a dissertation, and then a book on cultural revolution and

the Russian peasantry. The year I defended my dissertation (1979), Sheila Fitzpatrick's new book on social mobility had just appeared. And again—I should have read this book, but alas, it was hidden away in a “special repository.” I stewed in my own juice and tried to formulate an approach to the study of ordinary people in the revolutionary epoch (1983) without removing my Soviet ideological blinkers, without any reliance on the “other” (non-Soviet) historiography. But just exactly as the study of the social history of the USSR led Sheila, in her day, to a revision of the “totalitarian” approach, my work on “the person of the revolutionary epoch,” which my Soviet culture sector did not even let me include in its research plans, saved me from inane studies of the history of “party-state guidance of culture” and “cultural construction in the USSR” that were the norm at that time.

New times arrived. In 1988, the new deputy director of the CPSU Central Committee's Institute of Marxism-Leninism invited me, a relatively young historian, to work in that still semiclosed institution, and the institute's director, G. L. Smirnov, a former aide to Mikhail Gorbachev, appointed me the head of the sector for political history of the 1920s and 1930s. At that time I already had many opportunities to read Western literature and, to the extent that I was able, I took advantage of those opportunities. I think it was then, around the year 1989, that I read Professor Fitzpatrick's article “New Perspectives on Stalinism” (*Russian Review* 1986, vol. 4), an article that was important for me personally. I later referred to that article several times, in the early 1990s, in my polemics against the impoverished Russian version of the totalitarian approach, which dominated our popular historical writing in the late 1980s and first half of the 1990s. At that time, many historians got carried away by political passions and set in motion arguments that they had accepted uncritically and that were basically just “Soviet dogmatism turned inside out” (Sh. Fitzpatrick's phrase)—the propagandistic version of the so-called totalitarian approach in Western Sovietology of the cold war period counterposed against the “naturally bright” history of “the achievements of socialism” and “naturally black” history of its downfalls and defeats. Sheila's article, and then other writings by American “revisionists,” helped me to understand the ease with which several of my colleagues transferred their allegiance from one set of citations to the other, enthusiastically giving themselves up to the next overdetermined version of Soviet history, troubling themselves neither to study the works of Hannah Arendt nor to immerse themselves in the discussions between “totalitarians” and “revisionists” that had been going on for some time in the Western historiography.

At the end of the 1980s, my personal acquaintance with Sheila Fitzpatrick took place. We met at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Outside was a very cold winter. Sheila was in an enormous fur hat and coat, and looked simply splendid. She was working on her *Stalin's Peasants* then, and I was caught up in new opportunities for access to political history sources of the 1920s and 1930s. In a sense, each of us had what the other lacked. I had relatively free access to closed sources and an enormous Soviet audience, agitated by *perestroika*, that charged historians with enthusiasm and posed “vexed

questions,” and also knowledge of Soviet life and politics from within. Sheila had professional knowledge of the period and methodological experience, which we, Russians, had yet to acquire.

It is possible that the fact that in her methodological discourse, which for me personally was exceptionally persuasive, Sheila Fitzpatrick already rested on an attempt to study the *social* history of the USSR, weighted the scale of the professional choice that confronted me in the first half of the 1990s, after the collapse of communism. Should I continue with publicistic studies of political history or should I return to social history, with which I began my career under the Soviet regime? Being a contemporary of the wreck of the “old world”—an occurrence that has happened with some regularity in Russian history—I was again convinced of the justice of Sheila Fitzpatrick’s thesis about Russian power, which was unquestionably capable of initiating changes and even catastrophes (the “revolution from above”), but was incapable of controlling the results of its own actions or of building something new on the basis of the blueprints that had been prepared.

My deeply personal experience of that fact compelled me to turn my attention to the archaic social practices of Soviet life, to the standing water of everyday Russian existence, which was capable of extinguishing the waves of political and economic transformations. I switched entirely over to social history of the late Stalin and Khrushchev epoch, studied popular riots and uprisings, simple people’s sedition, traditions of denunciation, the social history of the Gulag, that is to say everything that was far removed from respectable political history, focused on leaders and heroes. I never believed in their ability to improve everyday human life anyway. It was good that my professional interests along these lines from time to time intersected with Sheila Fitzpatrick’s interests. It was precisely she who convinced me to study practices of denunciation in Stalin’s USSR and drew me to the project “Accusatory Practices,” supported my work and became the American editor of the book on popular opposition during the period of “liberal communism,” which will soon be published by Yale University Press.

In recent years, Sheila and I have rarely seen each other. But for me personally, the professional sociability of historians lies above all in mutual reading of each others’ work, “imprinting” what one reads on one’s professional memory, and the subsequent impossibility of writing without taking account of the other person’s experience, which one occasionally assimilates as one’s own. As a “historical nihilist” who has consciously chosen marginal topics of late, I very seldom have that experience. But in exactly that very personal way, I received the most recent writings of Sheila Fitzpatrick on “everyday Stalinism.” These books paradoxically combine “American” distance from the object of study (which is completely typical of “foreign” historiography), with something that is achieved by very few Western historians—immersion in the Soviet context, an almost “Russian” knowledge of nuances and details of people’s everyday life in the 1930s. To write the social history of another country in *that* way requires unbelievable courage, colossal love of work, and enormous talent.

The motley detritus of life's passage escapes the attention even of contemporaries and compatriots. Even Montaigne knew that a people lives in the everyday. Speaking personally, it is precisely this condition that places "ordinary people" outside the frame of "History." But neither in Montaigne's day nor for a long time afterward did anyone concern themselves with the historical meaning encoded in everyday practices. The people themselves always tended to be content with that: they were content in the past, and for the most part, are content today. Professor Fitzpatrick did not simply refuse to accept this low self-evaluation. She listened carefully to the inarticulate voices of the urban street of the 1930s and to Stalin's "silent" peasants, tried to decipher the ideological hieroglyphs, that the leaders and bureaucrats used to "mark" Stalinist daily life. Behind the crumbs and fragments she saw the nooks and crannies of life—whereas the public, up to this day, judges Soviet life only by its "red corner"—the place where the "bosses" made themselves comfortable.

Genuine social history puts the details of life in a global historical context, attributing meaning to our everyday hustle and bustle. It is precisely this kind of history that Sheila Fitzpatrick writes, capable of taking on the history of Soviet everyday life as cargo and delivering this "secret knowledge" to her readers.

*In 1989, Fitzpatrick accepted a job at the University of Chicago and shortly after met and married Michael (Misha) Danos, with whom she lived in Washington, D.C., commuting to Chicago throughout the 1990s. Her arrival at Chicago in spring, 1990, thus came at a time of great personal happiness, while the opening of formerly classified Russian archives and the presence of a lively group of graduate students at Chicago made this a uniquely rewarding time in her professional life. Chicago offered many opportunities for collaboration through workshops and team-teaching. Fitzpatrick's colleague **Leora Auslander**, who has collaborated frequently with her notwithstanding their very different intellectual styles, characterizes their personal and collegial relationship.*

## REMINISCENCES

### *Leora Auslander*

Sheila and I have been meeting periodically (not as often, I think, as either of us would like) over either a chicken-and-spinach salad at Piccolo Mondo or a spinach-and-portobello salad at the Medici (the restaurant choices in Hyde Park being limited). As we sit over our various forms of spinach, we have shared our mutual preoccupation with the seemingly small things of everyday life. The conversation has ranged from the intensely intellectual to the personal. We have taught two classes together (and plan a third) and jointly organized a conference. There are moments of easy agreement, over the quality of an article or of a student's paper, and moments of stark disagreement,



over the place of “theory” in historical writing, whether a given text should count as “history,” or departmental politics. I have learned a great deal from both the smooth and the rough conversations. I have also much appreciated that we can have both and continue to enjoy each others’ company, without papering over the differences.

Teaching with Sheila, I have found her very careful attentiveness to the details of writing (both the students’ and the assigned texts) exhilarating and impressive, if at times a bit terrifying in her exigencies. (The fact that the author of fascinating, but weakly documented, argument is a literary or cultural studies scholar is not enough to let them off the evidentiary hook, for example.) Beyond that, however, her readings are always insightful and acute. Sheila is even more of an “archive rat” than I, willing to give a student or colleague the benefit of the doubt if they have turned up a fascinating story, or intriguing material, even if they don’t yet know quite what to do with it. She doesn’t let it go at that, however. She is never too busy to work through a text, helping the author to figure out the argument lying within. Finally, and although this may sound trivial, those who have both taken and taught classes and written and read dissertations know that it is not, Sheila never has anything more important to do than to prepare class or get work back in a timely manner.

Sheila has invested a great deal of time and energy in the history department at the University of Chicago where we have both worked for close to two decades (she arrived a few years after me). She has chaired just about every major standing committee, whether serving a regular term or pinch-hitting when needed. She has a strong sense of institutional obligation and responsibility. She does not, as far as I know, explicitly self-identify a feminist, but she has been fully supportive of women students and colleagues. She has also been a strong voice for creative and innovative social history in a department dominated by intellectual history. She doesn’t, I think, believe in Affirmative Action, but thinks that discrimination is an appalling thing. In the inevitable conflicts academic departments live, she has been for me an estimable ally and a formidable foe.

In matters of our own everyday lives, Sheila often has certainties where I have doubts and worries. In a discussion of where to send a child to school, for example, it was transparently clear to her that one chooses the academically strongest and most interesting. Diversity or debates over private vs. public, were obviously secondary, not worth brooding over. I don’t agree, but found hearing and confronting the clearly stated position helpful.

Knowing Sheila I have learned a great deal about the healing powers of music, about the Australia of her childhood and the England of her youth, about the complexities of the field of Soviet history (particularly during the cold war). I have had the chance to think again about the costs and benefits of exile, of foreignness (although I don’t think Sheila would use that term in self-reference). I have had a chance to see how one estimable person, who has risen to a position of considerable power within academia, manages the tight-rope of responsibility and self-realization.

*After Michael Danos's death in August, 1999, Fitzpatrick turned to the violin, which she had hardly touched in forty years. Kiril Tomoff, one of the editors of this volume, persuaded the director of the University of Chicago Symphony Orchestra to admit her to the orchestra without an audition. Soon, she had not only regained her skills, but was playing chamber music several evenings a week. Fellow musician Alison Edwards describes the psychological draw of chamber music and the emergence of her musical friendship with Fitzpatrick.*

## PLAY DATES

### *Alison Edwards*

Give us enough time and we are apt to become junkies. It starts innocently enough. We took music lessons as a kid. Maybe we even got pretty good at it. We played a little chamber music along the way, perhaps some sonatas, but we haven't played our instruments for years. Life's demands distracted us: finishing school, writing the dissertation, organizing the working class, falling in—or out of—love, raising the children. At some point, something calls us back. The dusty, broken down instrument in the closet nags at us, and we open the case. Then we shut it again. Some time later we take it to a repair shop, or buy a new set of strings. Then we wait some more. We finally tell ourselves we'll just "try it and see what it feels like." It feels awkward, and it doesn't sound great, but it isn't grotesque, either. The dog does not howl to be out, and that alone makes it worth another try. Some players probably quit again after a few tries. Some join orchestras and play once a week. A few of us luck into chamber music—small groups, generally trios or quartets, where each player has his own part. We have set off down the slippery slope.

I met Sheila a few years into my own trip down the slope. My own re-entry was comic. Walking through the Chicago federal court building to file a *habeus corpus* petition for a client on death row, I stumbled into a bass player from my college orchestra twenty-something years earlier. He told me the Chicago Bar Association had just started an orchestra, and he was not deterred by my shocked claim that I hadn't even opened my violin case for two decades. He assured me it didn't matter. I could not possibly sound so bad that I would not improve this rag-tag band. It seemed like a good idea. My children were old enough to take care of themselves, my marriage was on autopilot—if that—and I had never gotten around to selling the old fiddle in the closet. The bass player was right about the Bar Association orchestra. No one could have played badly enough to bring its quality down.

Sheila's re-entry was more profound. As she explains it, after serious musical training during her childhood, she chose the university over the conservatory, rejecting her teacher's attempt to steer her into a music career. For the next forty years, she trucked her rarely played violin through Australia, Britain, Russia and the United States, nagged during particularly difficult

times by her teacher's curse: abandoning her "god-sent (or the equivalent) talent" would produce a life of misery. As Sheila described it, when I asked about her return to music, life came crashing down after her husband's death in 1999, and then music called:

I thought: this is it, either I play the violin or there is nothing more to live for. I don't know whether or not I would have had the energy to act on my own, but that's where the first miracle came in: two of my PhD students who played in the U of C orchestra went to Barbara Schubert, the conductor, and asked her to take me into the orchestra in mid season without audition and she agreed. So I went, and that was the new beginning of my life.

The second miracle was that the dog didn't howl:

I found, after awhile, that I could actually play well, more or less the way I used to back in my teens...I was astonished, exhilarated, rescued from the dead by the violin—I don't know quite how to put it. It was terribly important to me, and not at all to be taken for granted.

Finding a voice through music and being able to speak without words was a life-changing experience.

We met at the Interlochen Adult Chamber Music Workshop soon after Sheila started playing again. The workshop is a week in August set aside for aging amateur musicians, after most of the kids have gone home. Every summer 150 of us sleep on mushy beds meant for kids 50 years younger than us, endure showers that trickle hot and cold, if at all, and whine about the mystery meat slopped on military-style, sectioned trays, in an overcrowded, deafeningly loud cafeteria shared with 1000 kids there for band camp. We have low standards, but high expectations.

Morning groups at Interlochen are coached by faculty and cobbled together by an unreliable six point rating system for experience and technical proficiency, unreliable first because we rate ourselves, and second because there is no comparable scale for personality. Get the wrong mix of people and the morning is slow and painful. Sheila and I we were assigned together on the first day of the workshop. The designated work was Dvorak's "American" Quartet, a jazzy crowd pleaser inspired by Native American and African American themes, though it is more Czech than American. Dvorak wrote it in 1893 in Spillville Iowa, a town of Czech expatriates where he was on vacation from a lucrative New York teaching post. The "American" opens with a short, fast passage introduced by one violin and joined by the other, inviting in a catchy viola melody in the third measure. I started, Sheila joined in, and we handed off to a congenial violist. When the coach told us to try it again, three times softer, more mysterious, and more shimmery, we were able to do it. I was stoked. The reserved, grey-haired, slightly anxious violinist sitting next to me did not miss a beat. This was going to be a very good day.

You can tell a lot by how a musician plays. Chamber music is communication. The music may be timeless and well-tested, with good tunes and a

complex array of emotions, but it does not work unless each player is able to subordinate his autonomy to the group. Done right, playing quartets is not just putting the right notes in the right place, more or less in tune, but knowing when to dance—and with whom—when to joust, when to soar, and when to settle supportively into the background to make the other parts sound their best. None of it works without attentive listening, which is harder than it sounds. What passes for listening in our culture tends to be either a search for consensus, arrived at by rooting out fragments of agreement, or critical scrutiny of the message with internal preparation for rebuttal. The kind of self-referential listening that works in most settings would wreck the musical experience. You can tell a lot even before the first note is played. Does the player set up his stand and tune his instrument with an appropriate awareness that he is in a group of equals, or is he preparing for a session of parallel play? Sheila presented that morning as a serious communicator with good musical etiquette and a quiet intensity, satisfied to wait for the music to do the talking. A vaguely anxious affect did not seem warranted when she started playing: she had considerable technical skill. She was attentive to details like dynamics and color changes in the music, alert, helpful and open to suggestions from other players. She also had a keen desire to get things right. I would not have guessed what I learned much later: chamber music was part of a recent resurrection.

The beauty of the Dvorak group that first morning was that all four players were listeners. The coach had a Russian accent. He liked us and suggested that we stay together for two more days of “intensive study,” which at Interlochen means playing the piece more than once. If we agreed, he would be our coach again, which meant he would not take the chance of being assigned what the coaches secretly refer to as “special needs groups”—the ones that don’t listen. I readily agreed, mainly because I really liked this communicative new violinist with the Australian accent.

Music friendships start without biographical information, which comes in dribs and drabs. After the first session at Interlochen, Sheila asked the coach with the Russian accent where he was from. When he told her, “originally Russia,” she wanted to know which part. I was packing up my violin at the time and only half-listening, but I heard something about Russian history and The University of Chicago. The “Russian” part didn’t register, but my ears perked up at “Chicago.” This connection might have a future! I left fast, though. Our Russian coach was a sensitive musician and a wonderful teacher, but he also struck me as an operator and womanizer. Offering a personal connection beyond Dvorak was venturing into messy territory.

A few months later, Sheila invited me to play quartets at her home, a spacious, orderly condo decorated with Scandinavian furniture, family pictures on the living room bookcase, a pretty vase in the bathroom, and shelves and shelves of books in every room. I remembered something about Russia and history, but I was stunned, after the first movement of our first quartet, to look up and see the complete works of Lenin jumping off the shelves of her living room bookcase. The last time I had seen the complete works of

Lenin was in my own apartment, where my comrade/first husband read—and displayed—it as the owner’s manual for World Revolution. I must have sounded like some college freshman plucked from rural Tennessee. “What’s with the Lenin?” Sheila had no idea where the question was coming from, and I suspect she did not want to torpedo the very nice group she had invited to her home. Her response was as carefully measured and phrased as her violin playing. “Uh.... well... You know my field is Russian history....” In the early ‘30’s, her father had asked for the Collected Lenin as a prize from the University of Melbourne, as a way of thumbing his nose at the professors, who apparently could be counted on to be shocked by anything connected to atheistic communism. Intrigued, I scanned the rest of the books in her home that day. The bookcases in the hallway filled with mystery stories didn’t interest me, but what were those two shelves in the dining room full of books written by someone named “Fitzpatrick?” When I asked her if she had written them all, she said no. Some were her brother’s and some were her father’s. On closer examination, though, she had written most of them. It took me about five years before I got up the nerve to ask if I could borrow one: *Tear Off The Masks*. I was curious, but given the musical context of our friendship, it felt inappropriate and intrusive: a bit like opening someone’s bank statement.

When friends from parts of my life other than music learn that I know Sheila, they ask if I know what a heavy hitter she is in her field. My second husband’s wife, an art historian with an improbable sub-specialty in Stalinist Art, knows her. So does an old college roommate, a medieval historian writing what seems to me an equally improbable history of emotions. Academic life seems Byzantine to me. I guess I know at some level that Sheila is an important professor, but you would not know it from our music. She does not present as a big shot, and the content of her academic life rarely comes up in conversation. The closest connection I can think of is her love for the fifteen Shostakovich string quartets, which she plays with greater enthusiasm than most amateurs. I do not know to what extent her interest is historical, as opposed to musical or emotional. I hope it is mostly the former. The quartets are ominous, searing, desolate works. At the end of most of them, the world seems to gasp its last breath.

It can take a long time to learn important details about our music friends’ lives: married or divorced—or how many times—gay or straight, whether their children are programmers, congressmen or druggies, or what their joys and disappointments have been. Personal information is shared sporadically, over food, generally for a short time after we play, and eating, drinking and chatting are essential parts of what we do. Sheila is not a foodie, but she appreciates the players who are. She once enticed me to join yet another group by describing the hostess not just as an enthusiastic cellist, but as a gourmet cook who served spectacular lunches. Though Sheila spent years apologizing that her neighborhood had no functional supermarket, she surprised us one May Day with two original vodkas: pertsovka, a palate jarring

mix of chile peppers, garlic and ginger, and a mellow blend of lemon peel, cloves and ginger.

My impression is that Sheila is interested in the other people, at least once she is satisfied she is not dealing with an idiot. When my partner joined us for refreshments for the first time after a recent session, she made it a point to tell me later that she appreciated how he improved the conversation: more talk about science and politics, less about illnesses and car repairs. At the other end of the spectrum, she once approached me at a workshop, incredulous, after a conversation with a particularly aggressive player.

“What do you think he asked me when he heard I was a Russianist?” I had no idea.

“GUESS!” I drew a blank.

“COME ON! Just GUESS!!!” Still nothing.

“He asked that question about Catherine the Great and the horse.”

She told him to look it up in Wikipedia.

After you play chamber music with the same group for awhile, you start to feel a bond. Trust in musical communication is closely connected to listening. We trust each other not just to show up on time, learn our parts, share ideas and accept suggestions, but also to be there *musically* at precisely the right time, with the right affect, on a nanosecond's notice as the music demands. Though we do not talk much about communication, attentive listening and trust in our groups, I suspect it is these tacit understandings, brought together by the emotions in the music itself, that make chamber music a uniquely intimate exchange. I have no other way to explain why, with only sparse verbal interaction, music connections sometimes morph into real friendships. When one of my children had a psychiatric meltdown, prompting me to cancel some quartets, I was struck by the passion of Sheila's long, personal response. Moved by its empathy, I described some time later how I had tuned in to Beethoven's 9th on my car radio after I left the hospital that first night. The slow movement felt like waves, washing over my ravaged life, making it somehow bearable. I don't remember Sheila's response, other than something kind and gentle, about finding strength in unexpected places. What I remember is my surprise that I knew so little about Sheila's life, yet she was becoming a friend. The careful, task-oriented, communicative attention to detail that I appreciated in her playing, her technical proficiency, listening skills, and meticulous preparation were part of a much bigger picture.

There have been delightful surprises as we have played more regularly. In our last session before she left for the Wissenschaftskolleg, she told us that she thought she had asked for too little from the institute. In a previous year, another professor from her university had complained about her apartment floors. The Wissenschaftskolleg had dutifully removed all the carpets and sanded the floors. Sheila had asked only for four music stands. Thinking she

had not been sufficiently expansive in her requests, she upped the ante. "I told them I want aerobics classes." Jumping, stepping and sweating would be a good way to commune with the creative minds at the institute. She was slightly wistful and pessimistic that, even if granted, the class could be as good as her local aerobics class, though: Gospel Aerobics on 63rd Street. "It is GREAT: doing the moves to 'Holy Holy Holy.'"

Chamber music addiction creeps up on us. I have watched it happen to Sheila. It starts as a reasonable hobby, maybe once or twice a week. Then you start with the weekend workshops. After awhile, you want better groups, so you form one or two regular quartets and practice the music before you meet. There isn't much free time left, but when some really great player calls you for that one night in the week that you aren't booked elsewhere, how can you possibly say no? It is all about the music, but we bring to it what we do in the rest of our lives. Sheila travels all over northern Illinois—and then some—for a good quartet. We are meeting at a workshop in Budapest next January to play Bartok. She practices the music and is always prepared. If there is less traffic than she expects, she might show up early, but she is never late. Though she shows some level of caution and restraint in her playing, she knows how to take chances—how to "go for it" for dramatic effect, even if it means risking missing a high note or messing up a phrase. Sheila can be trusted to listen and to reach out across the real and the metaphoric bridge of her violin to communicate as part of a group. Everyone I know wants to play with her.

When Sheila asked me to play viola—not my usual instrument—in a Sunday morning quartet, even though we already played together in three other groups and I knew she had several others without me, I knew she was hooked. I accepted without a second thought

*Katerina Clark, professor of Comparative Literature and Slavic Languages and Literatures at Yale University, has known Fitzpatrick since the 1960s. A fellow Australian and close friend, she comments on the similarities and differences in their personal trajectories.*

## SHEILA FITZPATRICK, FELLOW SCHOLAR, FELLOW AUSSIE, FRIEND

### *Katerina Clark*

I did not meet Sheila until I went to university but in my childhood she was a somewhat mythical figure in my family. Both our fathers were Australian historians and my father would periodically tell tales about the extraordinary devotion of Sheila's father to her and his tremendous pride in her. Perhaps the thing of which her father was most proud, and never tired of telling, was the day when Sheila, a promising violinist, won an Eisteddfod, beating

out the daughter of Bob Santamaria. Santamaria, a rabidly anticommunist right-wing Catholic who led the Australian Family Association and was the unofficial leader and guiding influence behind the Democratic Labor Party, that had split off from the (to them) overly pink Labor Party, was a force to be reckoned with during those years of the Australian equivalent of the McCarthy era, while Brian Fitzpatrick, somewhat bohemian and no paragon of family values, was considered a suspicious fellow-traveler. He had been marginalized and could not find a position in academia, despite his fine publication record. So it was a moment of triumph for him when Santamaria, a prominent public figure and political enemy, felt obliged to humble himself and go over to congratulate him. But what my father could not fathom about Brian's attitude to Sheila was that when father and teenage daughter came to stay in our house for a big convention of historians in Canberra Brian gave Sheila the bed in the room they were assigned while he took a particularly uncomfortable and rickety camp bed.

Actually, it was in my bed that Sheila slept. I was out of town but very disappointed that I missed that opportunity to meet the legendary Sheila. I finally sighted her in college, though since she was a year ahead of me and in a different college of Melbourne University our acquaintance was only nodding. It was only later, after I had spent two years in Moscow researching for my masters thesis that she sought me out for advice on how to get there and what to expect. But an acquaintance born of Sheila's single-minded devotion to research blossomed in time into a close friendship, especially after she moved to America. We have in common knowledge of many of each other's friends and family, broadly similar areas of intellectual interest, and also being expatriate Australians in American academia with all the existential issues that raises.

In other ways, however, her life has been very different from mine. Sheila has of course been wildly successful, but her life has been overshadowed by a series of losses and deaths of loved ones, culminating in the death of her beloved husband Misha. The first wrenching death was actually one of two tragedies in Australia that came the same year, 1965, while she was a graduate student at Oxford, the second being the death of her father. The losses were so painful to her that she did not visit Australia for around 15 years. But when she finally went, for a couple of months, she sat down and, virtually without books, wrote *The Russian Revolution*, a classic to this day.

This story shows Sheila's vulnerability and the depth of her feelings, but the resulting book is a testimony to the power of her mind and her ability to synthesize and to focus. As Julie Hessler points out in this volume, one of the few aspects of Soviet life to which she has not paid much attention is the emotions. Sheila would point out that they are the most elusive as data and least available to empirical research, another of her fortes. But the emotions are also something Sheila is less comfortable talking about herself.

So the world knows the hard-nosed Sheila. Having essentially been thrown into the middle of the cold war in her childhood and suffered for



it, in adulthood she has opted for maximum distance and objectivity in her analyses of the Soviet Union. Though this may suit the economy of her emotions, she paid a price for it early in her career. I can recall sitting around a conference table in Bellagio at Robert Tucker's conference on Stalin with the young Sheila facing the overwhelmingly male contingent of distinguished scholars who were horrified at her resistance to the clichés of the profession. One of them was literally foaming at the mouth in anger and frustration.

To some degree the vehemence of the reaction was because the scholarly establishment expected this "little" woman to be especially compliant and reverential. In fact, paradoxically, one of Sheila's greatest assets in her early career was her gender and height. I can recall how at the conference on the Cultural Revolution which she herself organized a year earlier the male participants huddled conspiratorially on the sidelines trying to work out a match for her. For them next in order of perceived need was a tenure track position. Her (deceptive) appearance also contributed to her early coups in the Soviet archives and in persuading former officials to open up to her at a time when some American scholars were returning after a whole year on the I.R.E.X. academic exchange without even being able to get into the archive they needed, let alone complete their research. Her "little woman" appearance facilitated her coups in the archives but was far from the decisive factor. That was her sheer intellectual caliber, her determination, and a certain wiliness.

What has sustained Sheila through the various tragedies of her life has been her devotion to her students—and more recently the violin to which she returned after the death of Misha. During our long phone conversations and our heart to hearts on the walks we love to take together again and again she returns to talk about this or that graduate student. At Chicago, where graduate student funding is tricky she has fought hard to get fellowship money for as many of her students as possible, at times dipping into her own research funds to keep them going. She has also proved a formidable tiger getting academic jobs for her former students. And in her generosity to a younger generation of historians of Russia she has also used her own academic funding to help support the journal *Kritika*. So while her scholarly achievements humble us we should not forget her contributions on a human level: her great intellectual and material generosity, and her fierce loyalty to students and friends.

*Kiril Tomoff was a graduate student at the University of Chicago from 1993 to 2001. He describes the intellectual community that Fitzpatrick fostered with the University of Chicago Russian Studies Workshop and discusses her traits as an advisor of graduate students.*

## REMINISCENCES

*Kiril Tomoff*

When I sat down to write a birthday toast to Sheila Fitzpatrick to deliver on the occasion of the large concluding dinner at the Melbourne *Festschrift* conference, I wanted to focus attention on those of her many extraordinary attributes that make her a stellar advisor. Though expanded, these reminiscences are based on that toast, and take as their point of departure three anecdotes that for me typify Sheila as an advisor. As I did on that occasion, I must start with an apology that two of the three anecdotes are also stories about me, but perhaps one of the signs of a true mentor is that she becomes part of one's own story about oneself.

In two of the anecdotes, the University of Chicago Russian Studies Workshop also plays a central role. For those of us who were fortunate to be Sheila's students at Chicago during the 1990s, Workshop was the center of our academic community. Incoming graduate students were introduced to the rigorous but usually amicable intellectual exchange by professors (who informally required us to attend) and by more advanced graduate students (who emphasized that the professors were not kidding—workshop participation was only optional in the most formal of senses). The regulars sometimes literally took the new folks under their wings (I remember very clearly the night that Matt Payne put his arm around my shoulder after Workshop and said, "tonight, you're coming to Jimmy's," the local watering hole where discussion of the papers continued over beer and often with the distraction of a basketball game playing overhead, because it marked the moment at which I felt like I emerged shyly from the margins of workshop to become one of its bona fide participants). It was at workshop and discussions of what happened at workshop that academic life regularly ceased to be solitary and became social. It was exciting to be part of that community at the time, but in retrospect, it seems to me now—and to many of my fellow students from the 1990s—remarkable that such a vibrant and intense but collegial community exists. For me, it is the tangible representation of the academic ideal. One of the most remarkable things about Sheila as an advisor is that she, along with her Chicago colleagues Richard Hellie and Ron Suny, created and fostered the community that was anchored in workshop.

Now, to the anecdotes, starting with the first conversation I ever had with Sheila. I had come to Chicago as a Master's degree student in the small, design-your-own-degree, General Studies in the Humanities program. It was designed to provide students like me, who knew they wanted to pursue an academic career but had not yet been able to achieve a disciplinary focus, a chance to find that focus. Its only real flaw was that it was just a year long; applications were due less than one quarter in. When I first applied to the History program, I was offered admission—but no funding. My advisor in GS-HUM, Herman Sinaiko, thought the disappointing decision was

probably the result of a lackluster statement of purpose. He had concocted a scheme, which he had recommended with success before, whereby I could stick around, sit in on classes, and reapply. One of his earlier advisees called it being a "guerilla student, sweeping in from the hills to get an education and disappearing again before the Registrar notices." Professor Sinaiko suggested that I approach Sheila to ask if I should reapply. She agreed to meet with me, and we had our first conversation. It was a long conversation, at the end of which she said she'd look into it and let me know at the next workshop, an early sign of how important that institution would become.

The next Tuesday, I sat through workshop, jittering nervously, barely able to concentrate on the discussion of—I think—one of John McCannon's last chapters as I tried to read Sheila's face. Would I stay or would I go? Oddly, *she* seemed focused on John's paper and the discussion thereof. After workshop, she said simply that she'd looked into my situation and I should stick around. I didn't realize it at the time, but at that moment Sheila had committed to shepherd my file through the admissions process and look out for my interests from then on. This anecdote, I think, reveals the first aspect of Sheila's greatness as an advisor: she is committed to her students' individual cases, strengths, needs.

The second anecdote that I'd like to share is considerably less personal but demonstrates another aspect of what I think makes Sheila such an extraordinary mentor to her students and to young historians in the field more widely. The setting again was workshop, though this time the presenter came from outside the University of Chicago program. The presenter's paper was a theoretical exploration of the meaning of a cultural conception, the sort of amorphous topic that the most active workshop participants at the time found unsatisfyingly devoid of empirical support. What started as a critical discussion quickly devolved into ugliness as our guest got defensive and we smelled blood in the waters. In class the next day, when one of us described the workshop in terms not flattering to the visitor, Sheila let us know in no uncertain terms that the conversation had not been fair; she was very disappointed that we as a group had been unwilling to discuss the work on its own terms, to recognize the intent of the project as this scholar defined it, and to explore its strengths and weaknesses. I learned an important lesson about the significant sorts of contributions that can be made by all sorts of scholarly investigation, even those which are far removed from my own approach.

I later came to realize that Sheila's efforts to keep workshop cordial reflected not only her own appreciation of the possible contributions to scholarship that different approaches could offer, but also an attempt to use her authority to prevent the field from descending into the sort of rancorous exchange that characterized studies of the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s, sparing the next generation the sort of nasty environment that she and her colleagues of her generation had to endure when they were junior scholars. This impulse supplements Sheila's broad appreciation of multiple approaches and fair-mindedness, two more cornerstones of her greatness as an advisor.

When Sheila's husband, Michael Danos, passed away in August 1999, Sheila turned to music for solace and activity. It's hard to imagine a better place to return from a forty-year hiatus from playing the violin seriously than the University of Chicago. The University of Chicago was, after all, home to the author of one of the most powerful recent endorsements of amateur music making, Wayne Booth's *For the Love of It*, and its Symphony Orchestra is directed by a remarkable artist who has dedicated her life to creating opportunities for serious amateurs to make serious music together at a high level, Barbara Schubert. I had been playing in the orchestra since my first quarter at the University of Chicago, I met my wife, Lisa Geering, when she worked in the music department and we played together in its ensembles, and I financed my "guerrilla student" days in part by working as Barbara's librarian. The orchestra, New Music Ensemble, and related activities, in short, provided me the balance potentially missing in the life of a graduate student. When Sheila mentioned that she was thinking of playing again, and getting her violin back in playable shape, I was eager to share this community with her. I explained her situation to Barbara, who agreed to let her join the violin section midyear. As I remember the conversations, Sheila actually took a bit more convincing than Barbara did, but together with Alison Smith, clarinetist in the orchestra, we convinced her to join. Within just a month or two of rehearsals, orchestra concerts, donor dedication ceremonies at which orchestra members performed, informal "orchestra nights" at the ice rink on the Midway, and the like, Sheila's excellent technique returned, and she had discovered the rich musical opportunities, informal and formal, that Chicago had to offer. Alison Edwards's reminiscences attest to how important participating in that musical life has become. For me, too, Sheila's return to music was important. It provided an opportunity to see another side of this remarkable person, and our weekly rides home from orchestra (Lisa and I would usually drop Sheila off at her apartment on our way home) gave us a chance to get to know Sheila better.

Finally, another personal anecdote, and one of the most important conversations of my professional life. Twice a year, the Midwest Russian History Workshop meets to discuss work in progress, primarily by graduate students but always including something by one of the many distinguished faculty members who comprise the Russian history faculty at universities that came, in my time at Chicago, to stretch from the Great Plains to Toronto. The meetings rotated informally between our various campuses, and for us, the Midwest workshop provided a chance to present work that might be a bit more polished than what we brought before Workshop but was still work in progress. Of course, it also provided an opportunity to meet the faculty and our peers at other excellent universities and to learn from their reception of our work. In my last year as a graduate student at Chicago, we hosted the October meeting of the group. I was one of the organizers of the program and logistics on the ground (always a challenge at Chicago because of the paucity of hotel room space in Hyde Park), and I presented one of the last chapters of my dissertation. I evidently came across as demoralized

and depressed, couching all of my conclusions within extensive caveats and apparently failing to recognize the very positive reception that my chapter received. During our next ride home from orchestra, Sheila summoned me for a chat. She read my state of mind perfectly and explained how I could play to my strengths, highlight my findings, and stop giving the impression of being depressed by apologizing for what my project did not do. It was an impressive psychological insight combined with the exact encouragement that I needed, timed perfectly to coincide with the final stage of my eventually successful job search. This insightfulness and ability to inspire are, to me, the most impressive aspects of Sheila's remarkable mentoring.

Commitment, tough fair-mindedness, and insightfulness, not to mention incredible generosity—Sheila has them all in rare quantity.

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